

CIRCUIT RIDERS

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I want to dedicate this thesis-project and my love for Circuit Riders to all the people who brought me to this point of writing this thesis.

- Rev. Richard Humphrey whose love for these early Methodist preachers was contagious.
- The congregations of Staffordsville Circuit United Methodist Church and Eggleston Circuit United Methodist Church. These are the people who introduced me to Robert Sheffey the Circuit Rider responsible for many of the United Methodist Churches in Giles County, Virginia. As a pastor in the area I was expected and welcomed as a member of the Board for the yearly Camp Meetings.
- My pastor friends that shared their appreciation for their favorite Circuit Riders when they heard I was writing about them.
- I am thankful and blessed to have my family and friends support as I went through the process.
- Dr. Garth Rosell and Dr. Robert Mayer who made this tract enjoyable and put up with all of our personality differences. They treated all of us as if we were the most important student in the class.

## CONTENT

ABSTRACT	v
INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter	
1. FRANCIS ASBURY	4
2. CAMP MEETINGS: A MAJOR WORSHIP EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA	35
3. MORE CIRCUIT RIDER STORIES	38
4. CIRCUIT RIDERS WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI	78
5. YESTERDAY AND TODAY	87
BIBLIOGRAPHY	112
VITA	114

## ABSTRACT

From the beginning of time there was only one way for people to learn about God. God had to have his people go to others and share His story. The journey was not easy. Many wanted to stop them and keep God's message from being shared. In other instances the travel was difficult and rough. No matter what the circumstances of the traveling or circuit ministry, those called continue in what they are doing. As they work in this type of ministry they know they are where God wants them and they are doing what God wants them to do.

## INTRODUCTION

### Circuit Riding

*The verses of the following song are sung to the tune of Battle Hymn of the Republic  
The Choruses are sung to their own tunes.*

The Circuit Riden Preacher youst to ride across the land  
With a rifle on his saddle and a Bible in his hand  
He told the prairie people all about the Promised Land  
As he went riding, singing down the trail.

#### Chorus

Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms,  
Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.

The Circuit Ridin Preacher traveled through the mire and mud  
Told about the firey furnace and of Noah and the flood  
Preached the way to Heaven was by water and the blood  
As he went riding, singing down the trail.

#### Chorus

There is power, power, wonder working power  
In the blood of the Lamb;  
There is power, power, wonder working power  
In the precious blood of the Lamb.<sup>1</sup>

I only recently heard this song and knew from reading about Circuit Riding  
Preachers how true these words are. Circuit Riding Preachers are people given a great  
calling by God to spread the Word of God to people living in remote areas where there  
is not a local preacher. They spent many hours traveling from place to place to do what  
they knew they were called to do. They studied God's Word, they preached, they

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<sup>1</sup> Song shared by Frank Brown and Margaret Wilson of Staffordsville Circuit of the United Methodist Church.

shared God's love and did whatever they could to spread the Good News of God's love and grace. Some also had special gifts that got the attention of those around them. These special gifts were also used to help people see the great power of God.

My first introduction to Circuit riders came when I was a church secretary working with Rev. Richard Humphrey. Rich loved Church History and the way the early pastors shared their theological thoughts through sermons, poems, songs, and other ways of ministry. As he studied the early pastors of the Appalachian Mountains in Southwestern Virginia, western North Carolina, and Tennessee<sup>2</sup> he saw something special in the writings of John Adam Granade. I helped do the research for this book by going to the library in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania when I went north to visit family in western Pennsylvania. I made some copies of John's hymns that were stored on microfiche there. "The Reverend Thomas S. Hinde, an itinerating Preacher of Kentucky, included thirty-four of Granade's hymns in his hymnal, *The Pilgrim's Songster of 1815*,"<sup>3</sup> Granade's special gift was his ability to put his theology in song and poem.

After this initial introduction to an early Circuit Rider, I had the honor of being exposed to more and more information about these great men. My next exposure came when I was in seminary and had the opportunity to learn about John and Charles Wesley, Francis Asbury, and others. I needed to write a paper for one of my United Methodist classes. I chose Circuit riders because I had fallen in love with them as I read about their devotion to the calling God put on their lives and the desire to bring as many

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<sup>2</sup> This is the area of The Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church.

<sup>3</sup> Richard A. Humphrey, introduction and Compilation, *History and Hymns of John Adam Granade, Holston's Pilgrim-Preacher-Poet* (Emory, VA: Emory and Henry College, 1991), 3.

people as they could to the very same love of God that they themselves had. They seemed to think that the obstacles they encountered were part of the job. They looked at the blessings of being saved from harm and the grace of God giving salvation to those that accepted that gift. They talked about all of this as part of their work but nothing more. They knew they were instruments of God using the gifts He had given them.



## CHAPTER ONE

### FRANCIS ASBURY

We cannot go into the topic of Circuit Riders without beginning our story with one of the most recognized men associated with this topic. His name is Francis Asbury. He is perhaps the best known Circuit riders in American History. Many admire him but few would have wanted to live a life like his. It was not an easy life but a life lived for the Lord. He was not raised by believing parents so did not start out believing in God.

#### **Francis Asbury's Early Years in England**

His parents were uneducated people who worked hard but never had much. Most of the time the family lived in a cottage owned by his father's boss or the company his father worked for. His own education was limited. He quit school at an early age to go to work. The life of a laborer was the type of life he was with. Asbury started working for a wealthy but ungodly family in the parish. This lasted for a short time before he left to learn a trade. This was something else that was familiar to him. Being a servant and apprentice at the age of thirteen or fourteen was a common practice at that time.

Here he was, a young man being raised as the son of a common laborer and working as an apprentice for a metalworker. He was familiar with the lives of working

class people. He had a common school education, but it and his knowledge of the working class served him well when he started in ministry.<sup>1</sup>

His religious experience came over years. After the death of his sister, his mother became depressed. That brought her to the point of seeking spiritual help for healing and dealing with her grief. Asbury was about thirteen years old when a traveling shoemaker came to their area. He was a Baptist and spoke words that touched Asbury's soul. He knew there was something more to religion and started a discipline of prayer morning and evening. At the same time he started reading the Anglican sermons was influenced by Methodism. He also read other good sermons including some written by George Whitefield. These messages were so influential to his spiritual life that he realized he was ready to step out in faith knowing that this could bring persecution into his life. Many Methodists were treated badly with vandalism and beatings.

Asbury's mother realized Francis was interested in spiritual growth and directed him to attending a Methodist Meeting. The preachers at that meeting were John Fletcher and Benjamin Ingram, both members of the Oxford Methodists.<sup>2</sup> He did not fully understand all that was being preached but the effect it had on the people was impressive. He was not impressed with the sermons but realized the preachers were not reading their prayers from a prayer book or reading their sermons from a sermon-book. The people were devout and enthusiastic about their faith. This was not a familiar type of church, it was better.

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<sup>1</sup> John Wigger. *American Saint: Asbury and The Methodists*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University, 2009), Kindle.

<sup>2</sup> The group was started by Charles and John Wesley and their friends when they were at Oxford.

Asbury was moved by what he had been hearing in the services he attended but struggled over the meaning of salvation. He was praying in his father's barn with some friends and believed that he was pardoned of his sins and justified in his soul. His friends talked him out of believing this about himself because "Mr. Mather said a believer was as happy as if he was in heaven." This was something Asbury could not claim. It did not take long for Asbury to begin to believe that Christ had "graciously justified my guilty soul through faith in his precious blood."<sup>3</sup>

His conversion served as a gateway into the "excellency and necessity of holiness" and the Arminian beliefs professed by John Wesley denying a Calvinistic predestination which claimed that only some were eligible for salvation. Wesley believed that humans were incapable of reaching out to God on their own. It is a prevenient grace<sup>4</sup>, and a gift given to all people to enable them to have the choice of salvation or damnation.

Asbury's involvement in the faith deepened as he internalized Methodist doctrines and attended meetings. He developed the habit of walking to Wednesbury every Sunday morning with friends for the early morning Methodist preaching service. Then they walked about two miles to All Saints church in West Bromwich to attend another morning service and one in the afternoon, returning again to Wednesbury for the evening Methodist meeting.

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<sup>3</sup> Wigger, "Conversion," *American Saint*.

<sup>4</sup> Prevenient Grace means God is present with us throughout our lives. This grace is most clearly at work from our conception to conversion. It comes before any human decision or endeavor; it is at work before we are even aware of it. It is the love of God wooing us, the will of God drawing us, the desire of God pursuing us, the gift of God freeing us, and the activity of God empowering us. (Taken from the outline of the Clergy talk for an Emmaus Walk. The Emmaus Walk is 49 hour spiritual enrichment week-end.)

Asbury became a member of a class<sup>5</sup> and the involvement in that culture deepened. He became a leader in the class which involved more than just attendance. Besides leading and bringing structure to a meeting, a leader needed to have contact with the members to nurture and mentor their faith. This was usually done through the weekly meetings, but it also included visiting the sick and delinquent members and kept the circuit preachers informed on the character and status of each member.

While he was still an apprentice Asbury became a local pastor. This was not a paying position. It was helping the itinerant preacher by preaching when the itinerant preacher was preaching in another area of the circuit. Because of the large size of the circuits, these local preachers provided the help needed for the people to have services more often. This local pastor position was a turning point for Asbury.

He continued to work at the forge. He had his mother wake him at 4:00 a.m. so he could get his day's work done and make it to his meetings in the evening. These meetings would sometimes last until late at the night and he would start the next day with the same routine. This took place four or five days a week. On Sundays, he preached at three or four different places. The travel for all of these meetings could be three to five miles. At the time he did not have a horse so walked every mile.

In August 1767, Asbury joined Wesley's traveling connection on trial (a probationary period for new preachers), becoming one of 104 itinerant preachers serving twenty six thousand members on forty-one circuits in England, Scotland, and Ireland.

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<sup>5</sup> Classes were small groups of people living in a local area meeting regularly to ask the major question, "what is the condition of your soul?"

There were many obstacles to overcome and deal with as an itinerant preacher. All the Societies<sup>6</sup> were diverse, many had Moravian roots, and there were Calvinistic Methodists. The Moravians attracted the gentry, professionals, farmers, and tradesman, while the Methodists were mostly artisans and laborers, the majority being young people and women.

Mobs assailed the Methodist preachers on the circuit. A preacher was hit on the head with a dead cat. A meeting held in Bedford was in a room above a pig sty. During the meeting some young men fed the pigs providing lots of noise with the squealing and grunting. Their hope was force the people to be driven out of the meeting.

Violence and other problem issues in many of the societies caused many of the young circuit riders to be driven away from ministry. Asbury was able to move forward even with dead cats and rotten produce being hurled at him during preaching. Asbury was part of a minority who seemed to thrive on the challenges of the itinerant life, always pushing on in search of a deeper spiritual experience.

During this first ministry experience as an itinerant, the membership fell off. This did not discourage Asbury, he persevered and this experience gave him what he needed to be a Methodist preacher. In August 1768, Asbury was admitted into full connection, or conference membership.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Societies were at the time more like the church groups. They were larger gatherings for more service type meetings.

<sup>7</sup> Wigger, "The Young Preacher," *American Saint*.

## **Beginning Ministry in America**

On August 17, 1771, he was at the conference in Bristol when John Wesley said,

Our brethren in America call aloud for help. Who are willing to go over and help them? Young Asbury and four others offered themselves and he and Richard Wright were chosen. In less than a month they sailed from the Port of Pill at Bristol. Asbury had no money but friends gave him some clothing and ten pounds in cash.<sup>8</sup>

On the ship, Asbury started writing his Journal and preached every chance he had. After landing in Philadelphia on October 27, 1771, he preached his first sermon the following day. Moving on to New York, Asbury found things unsatisfactory. The pastors that came before him found staying in the cities was preferable. Even Richard Boardman, one of the two men John Wesley had sent to America as missionaries was settled in a city ministry. Asbury felt this was the wrong way to do ministry in America and wanted a few men to join him in circulation ministry. He knew he was in trouble when his superiors objected to this plan. He stubbornly resisted his superiors who felt they knew more about America than he did. His resistance initiated and began the era of Circuit Riders. With the establishment of Circuit Riders and itinerancy Methodism found its place in America. Soon others followed him in advancing to the frontier and moving the message everywhere.<sup>9</sup>

Asbury had the strength of character and the conviction of his ministry to move in a direction that was not comfortable to those in authority over him. He knew there were many people living in America that could not make it to the cities for services.

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<sup>8</sup> Elmer T. Clark, *Francis Asbury: The Prophet of the Long Road*, General Commission on Archives and History Madison, NJ: UMC, 1965), 5.

<sup>9</sup> Clark, *Francis Asbury*, 6.

They were spread out over such a large area and someone living in the cities could not minister to them either. Because the Wesley's established itinerant ministry system in Europe, John Wesley was pleased with Asbury's decision to continue this form of ministry in America. Had some of the plans of the more established pastors won out, Methodism would have stayed in the more popular towns and not spread away from there.

Many saw Methodism in America as an extension of Methodism in Europe. Asbury saw Methodism as something very different in America because of the cultural differences between the two. George Shadford was conscious of this cultural difference in his itinerant ministry in the South. This meant that Asbury had to take on the role of mediator between American Methodism and John Wesley. They learned to trust that Asbury cared about their concerns. This was an important part of his relationship in his American ministry.

In his travels through the Chesapeake, Asbury joined the others that were stricken with malaria. This was an epidemic that extended from the Georgia area and went as far north as Pennsylvania. This disease is debilitating and continued to influence his health for his remaining years. Health treatments at the time were crude and many treatments were guess work. Even as he dealt with his malarial symptoms between September 1773 and July 1774 Asbury traveled nearly two thousand miles and preached about 300 times. There seemed to be not much that would stop him from doing what he felt God was calling him to do.

One hindrance of Methodist itinerants especially in the South were the Anglican clergymen. They were a continuing challenge to the younger Methodist preachers. These Methodist preachers did not back down. When William Watters, the first native-born American preacher was preaching at the home of a member, the local Anglican Priest showed up and threatened the home owner because he had no license for preaching in his home. Watters did not let this stop him. He had the people move outside and finished his service. The law could not stop an outdoor service.

Another problem showed itself in the relationships between men like William Rankin who were still loyal to Wesley and believed that Methodists would always be under the center of Methodism in England and Wesley's guiding hand. Asbury did not believe that Wesley had any control over American Methodism and this brought strong disagreement between the two.<sup>10</sup>

### **Early American Methodist expansion**

During the years 1773 and 1776, there was revival in the Virginia a revival that became an instrument for growing Methodism in America. Over the next four years other revivals helped with the expansion of Christianity throughout America as expansion grew across the country. These revivals were very enthusiastic. Asbury was not one that encouraged this type of worship and did not participate in it. At the same time, he was open to the people moving in this direction if this was the way the Spirit was moving the people. There was a difference of opinion during this revival time.

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<sup>10</sup> Wigger, "Southern Persuasion," *American Saint*.



Some were upset with the outpouring of the Spirit with crying, calling out to God, praying, and singing as people reached out for salvation and thanked God for His grace. Others, like Asbury, were open to the difference of the move of the Spirit here in America. He embraced the new style of worship. Asbury was not an enthusiast in life or worship but he was open to the shouters, jumpers, and fainters at these noisy meetings. He did not fear this southern way of enthusiastic worship or see it as dangerous.

This revival concentrated in Virginia was a great boost to the Methodist movement. It also brought with it a problem. It was hard to keep enough pastors in training to serve the people. This brought a need for exhorters, class leaders, and local preachers to move into position to help the people stay faithful. A problem with keeping enough leaders was a tendency of the young preachers to marry and then want to settle down on a farm or practice a trade. This often took preachers out of ministry just about the time they were beginning to find their voice.

At the annual conference in May 1776 there was a discussion about the decrease of the work in the Northern Circuits and a praise of the increase in Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. It was here in the American South that Asbury joined with American Methodists to hammer out a new identity for the movement, but it was nearly pulled apart by the Revolutionary War.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Wigger, "Southern Persuasion," *American Saint*.

## **The Problems of War on the American Methodists**

Many of the early Circuit riders, especially those in the Allegheny Mountains and places between there and the coast did not want to be part of the Revolutionary War.

This war was another problem for Asbury and others in the American Methodist ministry. They experienced opposition from Wesley and others loyal to England and English Methodism. At the same time, Asbury and those loyal to America tried to be apolitical but still had to deal with the expected war.<sup>12</sup>

During the American Revolution, Asbury and some of the other Methodist preachers were regarded with suspicion because of their British connections. This was greatly accentuated in 1775 because of John Wesley's attack on the colonies for their rebellion against England's taxation. Most returned to England at Wesley's request. Asbury remained in America.<sup>13</sup>

Asbury was put in a difficult position. He did not want to speak against King George and cut his ties with his British colleagues. If he spoke against the colonists, he would break his connection with America. Was he to be loyal to King George or George Washington? Was he to take a chance of being drafted into the American army fighting against England, or take a chance of being shipped back to England because of disloyalty to America? "As always, foremost on his mind was and always had been his primary

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<sup>12</sup> Wigger, "One Revolution," *American Saint*.

<sup>13</sup> Clark, *Francis Asbury*, 8.

loyalty was to the risen Christ, the One who changed men's hearts regardless of their nationality, and who indeed, was neither American nor British."<sup>14</sup>

As Asbury was traveling toward Annapolis, MD where he was to preach, he was careful to avoid the Continental Army. He had heard about two preachers, Joseph Hartley and Freeborn Garrettson, being imprisoned because they would not take the oath in support of the colonists. He wanted to avoid their fate. "To say the least, this was an unfortunate interruption in soul-winning!"<sup>15</sup>

Asbury went into hiding and preached only where he felt safe. For ten months, influential friends gave him refuge and allowed him to preach in their home or barn. At one point soldiers came and wanted to arrest Francis for "breaking the law." The congregation took up a collection of five pounds the officer said would be the fine to keep Asbury out of jail. They were twenty pence short and one of the men in the patrol ended up paying the extra to make up the difference. He was reprimanded by the officer but did it anyway. This kept Asbury out of jail but moved him into a two year mode of being more secretive about where he was living, and only came out to preach when he truly felt safe. This was a hard life but a life that kept him out of jail until the danger was over.

Asbury spent most of this time with Thomas White in Delaware. Being in Delaware kept him from having to deal with the demand in Maryland for him to sign a loyalty oath. It was almost impossible to keep Asbury's presence a secret and he ended

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<sup>14</sup> Mark Alan Leslie. *Midnight Rider for the Morning Star*, (Wilmore, KY: Francis Asbury Press, 2008), 65.

<sup>15</sup> Clark, *Francis Asbury*, n.p..

up preaching in the barn owned by Edward White who lived near Thomas's home. As the war got closer to Delaware, Thomas White was arrested and brought their independence into peril. Asbury believed he needed to leave and spent nights with Methodist families as he traveled. He had to be careful, he did not want to cause dangerous situations for these families as well.

After only three weeks in Maryland and still being able to stay away from having to take the state's loyalty oath, Asbury decided to go back to White's. He was there about a week when Judge Thomas White returned. He had challenged his arrest on legal grounds and was paroled. Seeing this as a positive sign, Asbury chose to stay in Whitleysburg for most of the next year. Staying in one place and not preaching as much as usual left Asbury with a lot of time that needed to be filled. He chose to start filling these hours with reading the Greek and Latin texts of the Bible. He also started studying other readings he normally did not have time for when he had his normal schedule. Asbury may have been inactive during this year but he still preached at least ninety-five times and attended numerous prayer meetings and other informal gatherings at which he spoke.<sup>16</sup>

### **After the Revelation**

When the Revolution was over, Asbury started fighting against slavery. It was a small cloud over the nation but Asbury saw it as a coming storm capable of ripping Methodism and the new nation apart. He started preaching against slavery and

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<sup>16</sup> Wigger, "One Revolution," *American Saint*.

encouraged that slaves be set free. People opposed him with the excuse that if they gave their slaves freedom, someone else would sell them for slaves or they would use them as slaves themselves. These differences about slavery would become a delicate issue for the Methodists.<sup>17</sup>

Asbury turned his attention to moving forward in ministry. He established a pattern of relentless travel across the continent that would define him and the church for decades to come. By the end of March 1781, he estimated that he had ridden nearly 4,000 miles over the preceding eleven months, ranging from North Carolina through Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Rather than sticking to places with established Methodist societies, he often chose to visit settlements that Methodism had not yet reached.

Asbury's schedule left little time for him to carry out his desired prayer and reading. He could pray while he rode his horse or before and after his busy day but unlike Wesley, he could not read while riding his horse. He knew that Wesley read while riding in England, but the poor condition of roads in America, which jostled riders and demanded that they pay attention to what lay ahead, made it all but impossible for him to do the same.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Methodism and Slavery. In general, the slaves were included in the sharing of the gospel. After the Revolution, there was a division in the preachers of the North and the South. Some of the preachers in Virginia and further south had bought slaves, others inherited slaves and many were reluctant to free their slaves. This caused the division. The Methodists believed in freeing the slaves and making sure slaves heard the gospel. At the next general conference, instruction were established and sent to all preachers on how to free their slaves and what the timeline would be to accomplish the project.

<sup>18</sup> Wigger, "Looking Forward, Looking Backward," *American Saint*.

American Methodism expanded dramatically in the 1780s, built on the consolidation Asbury brought to the movement after the war. Suspicion about Methodist loyalties faded as the war wound down, and Methodists themselves began to feel more at home in the new social and political order of post-revolutionary America. The movement was still Wesleyan, but increasingly separated from Wesley himself.

Membership in America rose from 8,500 in 1780 to 57,600 in 1790, and the number of preaching circuits increased from twenty-one to ninety-eight. The culmination of this expansion and growing separation from England was the formation of an independent American Methodist church in 1784, with Asbury at its head.

### **Asbury's Move into Leadership and All It Entails**

On September 18, 1784 Thomas Coke sailed for America. He had instructions to ordain Asbury as a superintendent of American Methodism. Asbury invited a group of preachers to meet with him and Coke. At this meeting they planned an Annual Conference in Baltimore at Christmas. Sixty-five of about 83 active itinerants attended the conference, and they unanimously voted to form an independent church. They wanted no ties to the Church of England. They elected Coke and Asbury as superintendents of the new body. Asbury did not want his ordination to be just by decree of Wesley. He wanted to be elected to ordination by all present. He wanted and earned his position to serve at the pleasure of the American conference. At the same

conference, they authorized the 1785 Discipline the first American handbook of doctrine and practice for church members.<sup>19</sup>

Included in the Discipline was an outlined a plan to rid the church of all slaveholders. This outline gave specific instructions for emancipation of slaves; not to sell them but giving them their freedom. The preachers were instructed to keep records verifying compliance; members who refused to follow the rule were to be expelled, as were any members who sold their slaves. The plan would have systematically rid American Methodism of slavery and brought freedom to thousands of African Americans, but it was not to be.

Blacks had become influenced by Methodism and many African Americans joined as members. They not only joined and became faithful members but proved capable of leading and preaching. A good example is Harry Hosier, also known as “Black Harry.”<sup>20</sup>

Slavery was a deeply divisive issue that cost the Methodist the support of many former allies. Methodists had long faced opposition in Virginia, but the conflict over slavery drove resentment of the movement to a new level.<sup>21</sup>

The day after the Baltimore conference ended, Coke left for England. This left Asbury in charge and it was good that Coke left without incident. Had he stayed, he and Asbury would undoubtedly have clashed over their different leadership styles. Coke

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<sup>19</sup> Wigger, “Looking Forward, Looking Back,” *American Saint*.

<sup>20</sup> More information about Harry Hosier is in the next section with other Circuit Riders.

<sup>21</sup> Wigger, “The Campaign Against Slavery,” *American Saint*.

would have been a disaster at stationing the American preachers and tending to the myriad details of managing the church. Still, his ability to see the big picture had been vital in establishing an independent American church, raising forthrightly the issue of slavery, and laying the foundation for a Methodist college in America.<sup>22</sup>

There was always an issue between Coke and Asbury. Coke never traveled around visiting the American circuits as Asbury did, and was not familiar with all the nuances of the different circuit personalities. He also did not spend time with the American preachers and itinerates. Asbury held dear the stationing of preachers to the circuits. He spent a great deal of time planning so he could feel comfortable with putting the right preacher in the right area where they could do the best and where Methodists would be served the best. Coke was still attached to Wesley and the Methodism of England.

When Coke returned to America, he had instructions from Wesley on who to ordain as a co-leader with Asbury. He also took it upon himself to change the dates and times of the annual conference. Wesley was still trying to control the American Methodists and had told Coke to ordain Whatcoat. The Americans did not want Wesley's influence in their lives. Wesley was still connected with the Church of England, he had been against them during the revolution, and Americans did not know him except his influence in starting the Methodist movement. Wesley and Asbury exchanged letters and in Wesley's letter he was direct in putting Asbury down. This

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<sup>22</sup> Wigger, "A Methodist College," *American Saint*.



exchange put an end to letter exchanges between the two. The American pastors did not like Wesley's presumption that he could appoint leaders without consulting them.

Under Asbury's influence, the South Carolina conference, held shortly after Coke's arrival, changed the superintendent's title to bishop. This certainly wasn't part of Wesley's directions and most likely came from Asbury as an initial response to Wesley's new attempt to control American Methodism. The change in title carried no explicit increase in power, but it was symbolically important, further distancing the American church from Wesley. Wesley had always been careful to insist that he had never separated from the Church of England and that his superintendents weren't usurping the role of the Church's bishops. "How can you, how dare you suffer yourself to be called Bishop?" he wrote to Asbury, addressing him as "my dear Franky," when he learned of the change. "I shudder, I start at the very thought! Men may call me a knave or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall never by my consent call me Bishop! For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake put a full end to this!"

This was the last letter that Asbury received from Wesley, and it hurt him deeply (he called it "a bitter pill" in his journal).<sup>23</sup>

No one grumbled when Asbury appointed Whatcoat elder over nine of the church's most important circuits on the Delmarva Peninsula for the next year. For Coke, however, the worst was yet to come. After rejecting Wesley's orders, the preachers heard complaints against Coke for changing the conference dates and "for writing improper letters to some of our preachers, such as were calculated to stir up strife and contention among them." With the tide against him, Coke agreed to sign a remarkable agreement abdicating much of his authority over the church.

The conference also dropped Wesley's name from the minutes. It was reinstated in 1789, but not as before. It was listed in answer to the question "Who are the persons that exercise the Episcopal Office the Methodist in Europe and America?"<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Wigger, "Such a Time...Was Never Seen Before," *American Saint*.

## **Growth and Revival**

The year 1787 was remarkable for the growth of Methodism. This was due to the number of revivals and the expansion of the church's borders. The overwhelming support that Asbury had with the people influenced these people to trust American Methodism. The largest revivals took place in Virginia, which, along with the Delmarva Peninsula, had long been a stronghold of Methodism. During this time, there were great increases in both the Caucasian and African-American members. There was a 64 percent increase in Caucasian membership and 246 percent increase in African-American members. This also increased the number of circuits from fifty-one to seventy-six, and traveling preachers increased from 117 to 165. Asbury believed that more African-Americans would have joined the church if their masters had not stopped them.

In this revival there was a lot of shouting, and there was no doubt that it was an exciting work of God. Asbury was concerned that there would be a falling away after the initial surge of emotionalism subsided. He asked Ezekiel Cooper a pastor stationed in Baltimore to go to the area of increase, do regular preaching, and make sure the class meetings were organized and in the proper way to support the new members. Cooper

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<sup>24</sup> Wigger, "Such a Time...Was Never Seen Before," *American Saint*.

was to remember to visit the sick, the poor Negroes, and also the children. It was essential to keep the work going so the people wouldn't settle on their lees.

This was a great success for American Methodism but it brought a heavier work load for Asbury. He still stuck to his policy of visiting each region once a year, but as the church's borders expanded this became a more demanding task. During 1788 he held six annual conferences in as many states. By the time of the Baltimore conference, he was complaining that he could not preach because his mind was filled with so much information about persons and subjects that he learned about during his travels.

One obstacle found in his travels was that the roads were bad in the back country and bridges were few or poorly maintained. It was risky to cross these bridges, or making detours added more risk of danger and more time to their journey. The decisions made in these circumstances usually meant that Asbury and his companions would wade or swim their horses across rivers and streams. These crossings would often soak them and their possessions including their books. Asbury looked on this kind of danger, passively imposed by nature, as a challenge, a test of his faith. To survive under these conditions was an indication of God's approval.<sup>25</sup>

### **Challenges, Always Challenges**

There were always issues that challenged the Methodist movement that had to be handled. One was the decision of starting Cokesbury College. The college was thought to be helpful in the education of the pastors, this adventure proved to be

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<sup>25</sup> Wigger, "Revival," *American Saint*.

unsuccessful. American Methodists were mostly common people who could not afford to support the school and the preachers were not able to pay the costs of attending. The college burned a couple times, and ownership was transferred to others. Not long after the ownership changed it burned again and this last fire completely destroyed the college.

Asbury decided that because the conferences were so scattered, a council of the bishop and those elders attending would form an administrative body to have authority over all conferences. The idea was a good one but because it was not a democratically elected body, it ended up not being a success.

Another challenge came about because of the new status of the Methodists. There was an increase in Methodists; they survived the Revolution and the problems that came with them being accused of not being loyal to the new United States. This new approving status for the Methodists brought charlatans into the picture and caused another set of problems.

Three examples of what these charlatans chose to do are familiar to most. There were preachers that had forged preaching papers, not going through the proper process of becoming pastors. One ended up pocketing all the collections everywhere he preached which was not part of the norm. Another married a young woman from a reputable family. He already had a wife. The third was a man that took Thomas Ware's identity and told the people Asbury had sent him. He claimed that he lost his horse. There were several congregations that took up a special collection to help him out. This

was an issue that continued later when Asbury actually stationed Thomas Ware to this same area as their pastor.<sup>26</sup>

### **Asbury's Later Years in Ministry**

Asbury attended thirteen district conferences across the nation in 1790, again in 1791, and sixteen in 1792. His hope for the council as the church's central authority was falling apart and his health was declining. This brought on depression, and Asbury began to feel that he could be happy and at rest in death. As he was dealing with bad health and depression he believed God was leading him to move into Kentucky. This was a difficult trip that included rough terrain, fear of an Indian attack and a need for sixteen men in all carrying thirteen rifles. It turned out that many people in Kentucky were hungry for a religious experience. This was apparent when the crowds turned out to hear Asbury preach. Even though the trip was rough, his health revived which was a good indication to him that his contentment with his circumstances was a great benefit to his well-being. He thought that whatever he had to contend with was OK as long as souls were saved. This was his highest priority.

In the 1790 Baltimore conference a letter was sent to the Episcopal Church in America (the former Church of England) and suggested a merger.<sup>27</sup> This action brought

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<sup>26</sup> Wigger, "Be Not Righteous Over Much," *American Saint*.

<sup>27</sup> These two denominations did merge and become the Methodist Episcopal Church.

differences of opinions about whether this merger would be good for the Methodist church. Some felt that Episcopal bishops would be tyrants toward the Methodist pastors because they had classical education and social pretensions.<sup>28</sup>

In May 1791, Coke went back to England and Asbury felt free to turn his attention to the more basic concerns. He had always believed that the church's primary mission was to preach the gospel as widely as possible, continually pushing outward to engage the nation's rapidly expanding boundaries. One of these regions was New England.

In early June, Asbury crossed into Connecticut but not before he had annual conferences in Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Jersey, and New York. He tended to work as he traveled. When he crossed the border he sensed the region to be spiritually dead. This was partly a reflection of his own prejudices toward American's older Calvinist churches. Asbury was encountering New England Congregationalism at the end of a long spiritual drought. The Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s had revitalized churches across the region, but this had been followed by decades of institutional torpor.

In 1791 there were very few Methodists in New England. Under these circumstances, Asbury did not need to make the trip, but this was not a concern of his. As he had done in Virginia and North Carolina he wanted to share the saving gospel and be an example to other itinerant preachers as he always had. In Methodism, the

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<sup>28</sup> Wigger, "Be Not Righteous Over Much," *American Saint*.

pyramid of power was flat. This is one reason why there was so much trust in Asbury. He set the example instead of just telling them what to do, he told and showed.

The treatment he received in New England was not hospitable. He often could not find a place to stay, had trouble preaching because of the noisy sinners in the streets, and when he spoke at Yale, no one would speak to him. He received no better treatment than a snub. Asbury remembered not being welcomed in Charleston, South Carolina but there he was at least treated kindly with food and drink. He was so glad to be at the end of his time in New England and get back to Methodist hospitality.<sup>29</sup>

Asbury believed so strongly in the itinerant system that he had little patience for anyone that criticized the system. Most Methodists were in agreement with him and the way he led the itinerant system that their support. Preachers who were asked to take a difficult backcountry circuit could not complain because they knew his reputation. He was not the greatest preacher and men like Coke could surpass him in public speaking. What Asbury had was a knowledge of America and American Methodism. He knew the preachers, the different community needs, and had the organizational wisdom to put the right preachers in the right communities.

People tried to find fault with Asbury and tried to turn others against him. They had difficulty because so many had faith in Asbury and wanted to stay under his direction and leading. This brought a separation in the denomination. A group broke off and formed the Republican Methodist Church. Shortly after this group separated into the Republican Methodist Church and the Christian Connection. This new church

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<sup>29</sup> Wigger, "Be Not Righteous Over Much," *American Saint*.

was more strictly democratic. As a result it was also less able to distribute its resources wisely and more prone to bogging down in local controversies.<sup>30</sup>

With the controversy over the split; his exhaustion from traveling through New England, injury of his shoulder after falling off the horse, and then being sick and traveling over 3,000 miles holding district conferences and attending quarterly meetings Asbury was bad health. On top of this, he ended up getting the flu and should have taken time to rest. Instead, he traveled and attended eight more conferences scheduled before the end of the year. As a result of these health issues and the “treatments” for them, he almost died. He finally reached Charleston, SC where he had to take time to recuperate. He wrote letters to some of the Elders of the Districts asking them to handle the conferences and station preachers. He had a plan for stationing the preachers and sent these ideas along with the letters. He also let them know that they did not have to follow his plans exactly and told them to do as well as they could. This is a strategy that he would employ more and more frequently in the coming years. His age and health were becoming more pronounced issues in his life. From 1794 through 1796, Asbury adopted a reduced version of his customary annual tour.<sup>31</sup>

This reduced schedule brought more free time, but instead of settling down and taking it easy, he took advantage of this situation to do more pastoral work. He started doing more home visits like a doctor interested in the health of a person’s soul. He sat in on class meetings especially in the African-American and women’s classes. This

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<sup>30</sup> Wigger, “Schism,” *American Saint*. Schism.

<sup>31</sup> Wigger, “Reconnecting,” *American Saint*.



schedule marginalized him from the life of the districts he failed to visit each year. At the same time it offered him the opportunity to reconnect with the more fundamental workings of the movement. Most of the members and preachers spent little time concerned about the workings of annual conferences. They concentrated more on their class meetings, neighborhood preaching, and their community's discipline. The circuit riders traveled more extensively, but most of their time was devoted to these same activities. Devoting more time to these kinds of basic duties offered Asbury the chance to reconnect with some of the church's core values in a way that events of the past several years had not allowed.<sup>32</sup>

This extra free time also gave him more time to reconnect with the African-American Methodists. This connection and familiarity with the black Methodists and his preaching caused problem in his travels. Many Methodist itinerants could not find a place to stay and those that were slave holders refused to have them talk to the slaves. At one time Asbury was traveling through the swamp with a guide who was also a slave holder. Asbury started lecturing on the dangers of the man's soul because he owned slaves. The man walked off and left Asbury to find his own way out of the swamp.

When Asbury finally made it out of the swamp and to Charleston, SC there were about 500 people ready for his message. Out of the five hundred, three hundred were black. The African Americans enjoyed his services and talked of the goodness of God. The whites did not like Asbury's preaching and when he got excited while preaching most Caucasians left.

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<sup>32</sup> Wigger, "Worn Down," *American Saint*.

Another issue for Asbury was that some southern Methodist preachers also had slaves. There was a very mixed message when the Methodist stand was against slavery and some of those professing Methodism were not following this stand. Asbury could not force compliance he could only speak against this practice with the fear of losing members. This was a difficult time for all.

There was a difference in the reception of the anti-slavery message the further north Asbury traveled. He attended African-American services in the south, some with white supervision and some not. He also attended mixed black and white services in the north and came to the conclusion that it was best for blacks to worship separately. Asbury saw the need and began ordaining black preachers, even before he had conference approval to do so.<sup>33</sup>

### **Another General Conference**

At the General Conference in Baltimore on May 6, 1808 many serious decisions had to be made. The first was what to do about the Episcopacy of Asbury. He was getting older and his health was an issue. They also knew that Whatcoat's health had gotten so bad that his ministry had almost come to a stop.

Coke had never seemed to completely support and understand the American Methodists; he had gone behind their backs and done things that they did not like. He tried to push Wesley's plans on them and did not care about what the Americans wanted. He had not been in America for four years, knew nothing about the new

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<sup>33</sup> Wigger, "Weighed in the Balances," *American Saint*.

western conferences, and had never met the new itinerant preachers. After reviewing his history with American preachers, those at the conference made its decision. Coke could continue his present status but would not be permitted to exercise the office of superintendent or bishop in America until he be recalled by the General Conference if all annual conferences respectively agreed. Coke agreed to this. He could do nothing else.

Next on the agenda was replacing Whatcoat. Ezekiel Cooper suggested that each district have its own bishop similar to a diocesan system, with Asbury functioning as something similar to an archbishop or elder statesman. Asbury did not agree with this proposition and felt it more prudent to have two or three bishops who traveled all seventeen states and territories as often as possible. He thought it important that the bishops have a more personal connection with the people and preachers than just an overseer. These ideas were discussed, a vote was taken and it ended with only one other bishop elected. William McKendree became the new bishop. He and Asbury had a good relationship, and had traveled together. Others believed he was a good administrator as well as preacher.

The next item to be discussed was the quadrennial general conferences. Asbury was concerned that with the expansion of the American Methodist church, most preachers were unable to attend the Baltimore conference. This meant that the most representation was from Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Virginia. Asbury made a shrewd motion for each annual conference to be represented by a committee of members from their perspective conferences to represent them. Each conference was to have the same number of members on the committee. This was taken to the outlying

conferences in New York, New England, and Western and South Carolina conferences.

The results of the suggestion came as rejected with a favorable opinion that control would remain with the Central conferences as it currently was.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Last Things**

Asbury often had traveling companions and his new companion was Henry Boehm. He asked Boehm because Boehm was fluent in German, and Asbury wanted to bridge the gap between the American Methodists and the German-speaking settlers. From February 1807 to February 1808 he traveled 5,000 miles. This he did despite the fact that he was now sixty-two years of age.

During their travels of 1809 and 1810, Asbury and McKendree created a conference in upstate New York and the northern reaches of Pennsylvania. They named it the Genesee conference. This would assure that future bishops would at least visit this remote region.

One problem that was always a part of Asbury's ministry life was the need for preachers. The size and complexity of the traveling connection was both a blessing and a curse. There was a constant need to find preachers and to find replacement preachers for those who quit. Some of those that quit the itinerancy served as unpaid preachers, they simply could not continue the demanding life of circuit riding.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Wigger, "The Asburian Episcopacy," *American Saint*.

<sup>35</sup> Wigger, "The Crest of the Wave," *American Saint*.

Because of this need and the number of preachers, Asbury had to do something to help himself do better. He was one to organize his thoughts. This brought in the need of using a notebook to keep simple short memos about the preachers. He wanted to be sure of his decisions about stationing them in the proper circuits. Some of these notes were of good attributes and some not so good. His traveling companion at the 1811 Baltimore Conference, John Wesley Bond was noted to be pious, useful, and sensible. A presiding elder in the Ohio district in 1813 he noted as, his heart is in the work, seeks warmly perfect love, and God has blest him. Even though he thought another preacher, Richard Nolley was pious and prudent, he also listed that he could not preach.<sup>36</sup>

### **Goodbye**

In 1813 Boehm quit traveling with Asbury, and John Wesley Bond replaced him as Asbury's traveling companion. Asbury felt that Bond was the best aid he ever had.

His health was failing and on March 24, 1816 he preached his last sermon. He was so weak that he had to sit on a table to preach and had to be carried in because he could not walk to the table. A few days later on March he died peacefully at the home of George Arnold in Spotsylvania County. Bond was at his side when he breathed his last. He was unencumbered by this world's things, only caring about preaching the gospel to lost souls.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Wigger, "Asbury Notebook," *American Saint*.

<sup>37</sup> Wigger, "A Living Death," *American Saint*.

The first American Conference was in Philadelphia on July 14-16, 1773. At the time there were ten preachers and 1,160 members in society. At the time of his death on March 31, 1816 things had greatly changed and much was accredited to Asbury himself.

For forty-five years he had been a man without a home. His only abode was the saddle and the open road, and he ate and slept wherever he happened to be at the time. Surpassing John Wesley as a traveler, Francis Asbury journeyed some 275,000 miles and he preached an average of one sermon a day for nearly half a century. On Asbury's arrival in America there were a dozen lay preachers and a thousand "members in society." When he died there were 700 preachers and 214,000 members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He held 224 Conferences, ordained 4,000 preachers and saw Methodism outstrip the growth of the population five to one.

This was the preacher who was known as "the man who rambles America" and of whom it was said that he was "the most familiar figure on every road."<sup>38</sup>

Asbury was so well known that in a letter "he told a correspondent in England to address him simply in "America"; all the postmasters knew "the man who rambled America: and that he would soon pass that way."<sup>39</sup>

Asbury gets the credit for the great increase in people coming into the Methodist Episcopal Church. He did not actually preach and minister to all these individuals but it was his initiative that established the Circuit riding ministry. He knew he could not do the job alone and welcomed others in this ministry. The proof is that when he died, he had ordained so many. Some of those who were called by God to follow the circuit

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<sup>38</sup> Clark, *Francis Asbury*, 19.

<sup>39</sup> Clark, *Francis Asbury*, 12.

riding path went to places thousands of miles from the cities Asbury was first introduced to.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CAMP MEETINGS: A MAJOR WORSHIP EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA

In 1802 Asbury attended a camp meeting while in eastern Tennessee. This may have not been the first time he attended such a meeting but it is the first one called by that name. Many other meetings were outdoor meetings, usually because of lack of space but this one was called a camp meeting. Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists all could claim being the denomination to start this practice. For Presbyterians, the practice could represent an extension of the traditional multi-day sacramental meetings brought to American by the Scotch-Irish immigrants decades earlier.<sup>1</sup> For the Baptists it may be related to their associational meetings which also lasted several days. These meetings drew people from a wide geographical region.

On the other hand, Methodist camp meetings represented a logical extension of the quarterly meetings. These quarterly meetings were used to draw together the preachers and people of a given circuit four times a year for over thirty years. They fostered the connection that is so important for the Methodists.

The transition to camp meetings was easy for Methodists. They had a long history of holding extended meetings lasting two or three days. The only real difference was the camping itself. These camp meetings improved the evangelized program of sharing the doctrines of repentance, conversion, and sanctification. It was now represented in a new, more culturally accommodating setting.

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<sup>1</sup> Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scotland and the Making of American Revivalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989).



The early meetings did not accommodate the non-members who were not inclined to travel long distances counting on the hospitality of strangers. Members expected other members to give them a place to stay. This new openness of camp meetings offered a place for a broader audience. Families brought their wagons, tents and provisions giving them a place to lay their heads at night and meals for the days they were there.

The camp meetings were another instance where the good news of spiritual awakenings and revival met with the bad news of attacks by those that were opposed to them. Some of those against the move of the Spirit brought charges of noise disturbances against the meetings. Some who did not understand, even charged them with intoxication. Some went to the services intent on causing problems. Some of these were drunk themselves and when those attending tried to stop their harassment, the troublemakers assaulted them. Some that were forced to leave the service even would have the preachers arrested for breaking the Sabbath, drunkenness and fighting. There is even a record of Asbury being charged with fighting. However, he was not on the grounds of the camp meeting at the time of the fighting. Even if he had been there, no one that knew him would have expected him to be in the fight. He had an aversion to public conflict and he was in frail health. There was a true mix of emotions and camp meetings tended to be messy affairs. There was risk of runaway enthusiasm among the worshippers and violent attacks from rowdies. One thing they could normally count on

was the scenes of sincere spiritual awakening and discovery, and for this reason, Asbury was willing to hazard all other difficulties.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Wigger, "Like a Moving Fire," *American Saint*.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MORE ON CIRCUIT RIDERS

#### **Robert Sheffey**

My second church appointment as a pastor took me to Giles County, Virginia. There I learned about Robert Sheffey, the Circuit Rider responsible for starting most of the churches in the area. His area of influence as a preacher included Giles County and the Counties of Bland, Wythe, Pulaski, and some congregations in Montgomery County. Besides people in this area of Giles County talking about Sheffey, each summer there is an eight day<sup>1</sup> Robert Sheffey Memorial Camp Meeting at the Robert Sheffey Campground. His grave is in the cemetery at Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church, Trigg, Virginia. This church and cemetery are located at the entrance of the Campground. His home has been moved to a spot beside the cemetery on the road leading to the campground. Even though these churches started by Sheffey are now United Methodist Churches,<sup>2</sup> he was not a Methodist preacher. He tried to join the Methodists as a pastor and was turned down, even though he preached the Methodist theology throughout his ministry.

Sheffey was not an acclaimed preacher. He preached at many churches and at numerous camp meetings but is best known for his faith and answered prayer. In his

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<sup>1</sup> This recently changed to two days with a youth concentration and overnight camping. The evening services include attendance of the adults. Then four evening services for all.

<sup>2</sup> Most were originally Methodist Episcopal Churches, Methodist South Churches or just Methodist Churches and became United Methodist with the merger of the Evangelical United Brethren Churches and the Methodist Churches in 1968.

book, *Brother Sheffey: A Christian Who Knew the Power of Prayer*, Willard Sanders Barbery includes some articles from *The Bristol News* of February 18, 1890, Richmond Christian Advocate and Johnson's "History of the Middle River Settlements and Contiguous Territory." In all three articles there are stories of Robert and his prayers being answered.

*The Bristol News* article was actually a sermon prepared by the Rev. B.F. White on "The Method to Defeat the Institutions of Intemperance." It tells us of his experience with Brother Sheffey's prayers for the destruction of the distilleries they came across in their travels. The first one mentioned that Robert wanted to stop and pray against a still house.

We agreed. He said, 'Hold my horse until I go in and pray with the family,' but they would not let him pray, as we told him. A widow lady was the proprietor. She took sick and died in a very short time, leaving a son to succeed her. He became insane and was sent to an asylum. The place was sold, and the distillery ended at the place, all too, in a very short time!

On another creek there were three distilleries . . . The proprietor of the one on the lower end, was a well-to-do man, with robust health. Brother Sheffey prayed that his still would be prized out with a crowbar. The proprietor died very suddenly and the administrators were actually prizing the still out with a crowbar before they thought of Sheffey's prayer.

The proprietor of the one above this was an old man. Brother Sheffey prayed that his stillhouse might be turned into a sheep-pen. In a very short time he sold his farm to a good Methodist, and a Christian family, who actually made a sheep-pen out of the still house.

The proprietor of the upper one was a very wicked man, who, when he found out we were praying for the downfall of his stillhouse threatened to whip us, and actually made the attempt! Brother Sheffey prayed that a tree might fall on his stillhouse and break its back! The people were surprised at the prayer as there

was no tree near the place, but in a short time a great storm came and actually landed a tree on the still house.<sup>3</sup>

In the article in the *Richmond Christian Advocate* is written: "Whiskey men fled away from a certain creek for fear of his prayers."<sup>4</sup>

His prayers against the stillhouses were not the only prayers he was known for. "History of the Middle New River Settlements and Contiguous Territory," tells the story of a child getting suddenly ill at the close of a service. They believed the child to be dying,

When Mr. Sheffey appeared and being informed of the cause of the trouble, said. "Brother, give me the little child." And taking it in his arms he fell upon his knees, and in a most earnest prayer to God asked for the life of the little child and that it might be restored to its mother. Arising from his position on the ground, he handed the child to its father, remarking. "Here, brother, is your little child well and all right." And so it was.<sup>5</sup>

During the annual Robert Sheffey Camp Meeting the Board tried to make this Camp Meeting an extension of his ministry. The main reason to have the campmeeting is to share God's Word with anyone who will listen. There is great music and always a great message. A Board decides who the evangelist will be, and because Robert was not a Methodist pastor and they want to include everyone in the area, the evangelist is not always a United Methodist. The love of God that he started spreading has caused a ripple effect that will continue to spread as long as there are people in this area that love God and want to continue in this ministry.

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<sup>3</sup> Willard Sanders Barbary, *Brother Sheffey: A Christian Who Knew the Power of Prayer* (Salem, OH; Schumul Publishing, 2002), 76.

<sup>4</sup> Barbary, *Brother Sheffey*, 77.

<sup>5</sup> Barbary, *Brother Sheffey*, 77.

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<sup>4</sup> Barbery, *Brother Sheffey*, 77.

<sup>5</sup> Barbery, *Brother Sheffey*, 77.

## Harry Hosier

Harry Hosier or “Black Harry” as he was known in ministry could neither read nor write so his story is told by others. He was a horseman for the Lord or what we would call a circuit rider. He preached to whites as much as he preached to blacks. His was an outstanding example of an inclusive ministry in American Methodism,<sup>6</sup>

Harry was born in what is now Fayetteville, North Carolina. It is believed that he was a slave of Henry (Harry) Dorsey Gough, an owner of a plantation twelve miles northeast of Baltimore. It is not known exactly how he got his freedom. He could have bought it, or was given it by his owner whoever that was at the time he was freed.<sup>7</sup>

It is not known when and how Francis Asbury and Harry Hosier met. It was January 24, 1773 when Asbury was in Baltimore and wrote about the “poor Negroes” and how they have astonished their owners when they have heard the prayers of their slaves. The first time Asbury mentioned Harry Hosier was June 29, 1780.<sup>8</sup>

It was shortly after this mention that Asbury planned an evangelistic campaign to reach the slaves. He took Hosier as a traveling companion to help him meet the African-Americans. It was a year later, May 13, 1781 when Asbury mentions Harry and it is in response to how Harry was treated. At a service in Fairfax Chapel in Falls Church, Virginia, the two spoke and the whites had never heard an African-American preach and

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<sup>6</sup> Warren Thomas Smith, *Harry Hosier: Circuit Rider*. (Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 1981), 18, 19.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, *Harry Hossier*, 20.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, *Harry Hossier*, 21.

looked on in attention.<sup>9</sup> Asbury became concerned that Harry might become ruined because the white's flattered him.

The next day when Hosier spoke to a black congregation and a serious issue arose that caused a problem between him and his listeners. Hosier included the statement that if they were not faithful to their holiness, they could fall from grace. Many of them had heard the Baptist message of "once in grace, always in grace." This debate was always present between the denominations.<sup>10</sup>

As stated earlier, Harry Hosier had no formal education and could not read or write. He did however have a good mind and remembered what he heard of scripture. He could quote passages and preach on those passages. He spent months with Asbury and other preachers riding circuits, and learned much as he talked with them about the Bible, fundamental beliefs, the Christian life and prayer. He also learned much at camp meetings as he listened to fellow preachers.<sup>11</sup>

A few of the preachers Hosier traveled with besides Asbury were Thomas Coke, Freeborn Garrettson, and Richard Whatcoat. All of these men had good reports of their time ministering with him.

### **Freeborn Garrettson**

There was a lack of money to pay preachers, but when it came to Methodist pastors in the North that was not the main problem. The New Light exuberance

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<sup>9</sup> Smith, *Harry Hossier*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, *Harry Hossier*, 23.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, *Harry Hossier*, 26.



following the Great Awakening was fading fast. Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Congregational churches that were the main denominations in that area, and were stamping out the New Lights with a more formal type of worship. The one exception to this lack of New Light exuberance was in up-state New York which at the time (1790) was still considered the western frontier. Asbury asked Freeborn Garrettson to serve in this area.

Garrettson was a Marylander who had freed his slaves shortly after he was converted. He had a bold, ambitious, and pleasantly stubborn personality. His spirituality was as intense as Asbury's but with a more mystical quality. Because of family financial security, he had been able to stay in school until age seventeen. This made him better educated than most circuit riders. He spent some time as Asbury's assistant and was dependable.

Garrettson was ordained at the Christmas Conference of 1784 and was first sent to Nova Scotia, Canada as a missionary to English settlers and former American loyalists. His talents served him well and he had great success in this ministry.

Garrettson's success in Nova Scotia brought Asbury to the realization that he had dealt with challenging situations. He then chose to send him to this frontier area of New York. As he ministered in this frontier he also had to deal with some urbane New Yorkers. His reputation as a mystic was accompanied by a genteel background and easy manner that helped him deal with all types of people. What made Garrettson the perfect choice for this area was his combination of intelligence, level-headed good sense, and fearless zeal.

A reputation followed Garrettson and the Methodists in upstate New York.

There was a weird rumor about these Methodist preachers. It was said that they threw blue spiders on their victims to enchant them.

When Garrettson first started as supervising elder for the New York Methodists he had twelve young preachers under his charge. Every three months he rode the 1,000 miles and preached about 100 sermons in each round. During his first year, the membership in this frontier district increased from 535 to 1,420.

Because of Garrettson's continued success, he soon had the responsibility of ten circuits and nineteen preachers. He had taken a wife so Asbury kept him stationed in upstate New York doing ministry for the next decade. Pastors did not usually stay in the same place for that long. Over time Garrettson became a presiding elder, and Asbury felt he had chosen well in his original plan to send Garrettson to New York.<sup>12</sup>

### **William Hammet**

William Hammet was an Irish Methodist preacher ordained by John Wesley in July 1786 and sent to the Americas as a missionary. His ship was to take him to Newfoundland, Canada. During the voyage the ship was blown off course by a spectacular storm and instead of doing ministry in Newfoundland, he ended up on the island of St. Kitts in the Caribbean. In 1789, Coke transferred Hammet to the island of Tortola and later to Jamaica. This life did not agree with Hammet and he was found

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<sup>12</sup> Wigger, "Freeborn Garrettson and New York."

emaciated with an ulcerated face. Coke then took him to America. Another shipwreck put them at Edisto Island and they went on to Charleston, South Carolina from there.

The Methodists of Charleston decided they wanted Hammet as their preacher. This idea of preachers choosing their stations or congregations choosing their pastors was not something that Methodists did. Their stationing was a decision that was made by Bishop Asbury. Hammet did not want to be under the authority of Asbury or the two preachers that were already in the Charleston area. He also did not understand the differences between Methodism in England and American Methodism. Because of Hammet's refusal to serve under the authority of the presiding elder in Charleston, Reuben Ellis, there was a problem in the Charleston, South Carolina district.

Asbury returned to Charleston and found out about the problems. There was a commotion among the people and division in the society. Hammet did not like Asbury being in charge of the episcopacy. He did not care for the idea that American Methodists did not follow the more formal style of robes and powdered wigs for services.

Because of these issues, he did not accept the American Methodist system. Hammet decided to take some of those that followed him and work toward starting a new denomination, The Primitive Methodist Church. He enlisted four other Methodist pastors to go into this new endeavor. This new church expanded into North Carolina and Georgia, and included several missions in the Caribbean. This move of Hammet's

was not supported by Methodism in America or Britain, and after Wesley's death, Coke also took a step backward in his support of Hammet.<sup>13</sup>

### **John Kobler**

John Kobler experienced his conversion when he was 19. He joined the itinerancy when he was 21 and was received into full connection in the Methodist church within a few years. He so impressed Asbury and moved quickly through the ranks. With full connection he was moved to Greenbrier circuit s in western Virginia.<sup>14</sup> The following year he was an elder and put in charge of the Holston circuits.<sup>15</sup>

As presiding elder Kobler wrote up rules for the preachers to follow for their daily life:

1. Let every preacher who is in health rise in the morning by light
2. Before he starts in his appointment reserve an hour at least for retirement to be spent in prayer & reading the bible.
3. Preach & Meet the class.
4. From the time of public service till evening retirement spend an hour & half in the most useful Improvements retired from Company.
5. From evening retirement till family prayer, to be spent in Reading, Singing and Godly Conversation with the family.
6. Visit the Sick whenever we can, whether they send for us or no.<sup>16</sup>

### **Richard Allen**

Richard Allen was an important example of what African American Methodist could accomplish in the more tolerant setting of the more northern circuits. Allen was

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<sup>13</sup> Wigger, "Schism: Hammet."

<sup>14</sup> Now part of West Virginia and West Virginia Conference.

<sup>15</sup> Now in south western Virginia and eastern Tennessee.

<sup>16</sup> Wigger, "Location 4653."

born into a slave family on February 14, 1760. He became the leading black Methodist of his generation, and a counterpart of Asbury for the African American Methodists.

There is little written about his early years except that he was sold by one owner to another. Even though the second owner was kind, he sold Richard's mother and three of his siblings, and Allen was left with a brother and a sister. It is believed that little was written either because it was something he did not want to remember or it was a common life of a slave so he felt it did not warrant acknowledgement.

He, his sister, and brother were all converted and joined a class meeting at a farm owned by Benjamin Wells less than a mile from his home with Sturgis. This conversion brought the two young slaves to a decision to be more faithful to their master's business. They did not want anyone to think badly of this religion that they accepted.

Allen started holding family prayer in Sturgis's kitchen and eventually Sturgis and his wife joined in. Sturgis then invited the Allens to move their prayer meeting to the parlor. Sturgis was so impressed with the Allens that he encouraged them to attend the Methodist meetings and allowed them to invite preachers into his home.

This brought Sturgis to the belief that he should give Allen the chance to buy his freedom. He allowed Allen to pay in installments over a five year period. To earn the money Allen started working harder. Allen cut wood, worked in a brickyard, drove salt wagons, and preached at stops along the way. He worked so hard at earning his freedom money that he paid off the debt a year and a half early.

In 1786, Allen joined the society at St. George's church. He began preaching to the African American population in the city and became their local preacher. His schedule would often include preaching two times each day with more than that on Sundays. Allen soon got together forty-two African Americans to form a society, and they met with the white Methodists.

In this group was Absalom Jones. Jones was another man raised a slave who was able to gain his freedom. Allen and Jones went to the district elder requesting permission to open a separate church. With degrading and insulting language, their request was refused. Instead, Allen and Jones with other black leaders formed the Free African Society in April 1787.

The members of this new Society were expected to live orderly and sober lives and to contribute a shilling a month to help support widows and orphans. This money could also help others in need.

When this black society went to join the whites in worship at St. George's church, Allen, Jones, and the others were treated harshly. They walked out of the church and proceeded to establish their own congregation.

They finally were able to start building and shortly after the construction of the church began, the calamity of the 1793 yellow fever epidemic struck the white communities. Many were abandoned as soon as they showed any sign of being ill. Even mothers abandoned their children. Benjamin Rush, a man that supported Allen and his new church, asked Allen to join in helping the sick. He even mentioned that the yellow fever would not affect those of color. Even though they could have stayed away, Allen

and his friends agreed to help. They found out that their color did not make a difference and Rush realized his error too late. Allen himself got very ill. He recovered but by the end of the scourge, 240 African-Americans had died.

As Allen and the African-American Methodists re-grouped after the scourge, they still wanted to form a church of their own. There was a discussion about whether to stay with the Methodists or join with the Episcopal Church. There were some benefits of joining the Episcopal Church but Allen felt the better fit was with the Methodists. Methodists were the first to accept and share the Gospel with them. Their experience with the presiding elder in Philadelphia where St. George's church stood was an exception to that relationship. Allen did not want the choice between Episcopal and Methodist to be financial. He wanted it to be because of the Gospel. Besides the Methodists welcoming them first, their way of presenting the Gospel was plain and easy to understand. Allen felt some of the other denominations preached in a manner hard to comprehend. He was born and awakened under the Methodists and wanted to stay with them.

Asbury had been supportive of Allen and his ministry, but he did not believe it was his place to personally intervene. The leadership pyramid for the Methodists was flat and it was working, and so Asbury preferred allowing others to use their talents to work out the solutions to the problems. Working in the background, Asbury removed the presiding elder of Philadelphia that opposed Allen and his people, and appointed Freeborn Garrettson to that circuit. Garrettson was a supporter of Allen's ministry and an advocate for the freedom for the slaves having earlier freed the slaves he had

owned. Asbury felt this was a better fit for the black church to move forward in their desires for themselves.

Because of the support he received Allen bought a former blacksmith shop, moved it, had it repaired, and made it a place of worship. It was dedicated in June 1794 with Asbury preaching the dedication sermon for this new church, called Bethel. Asbury being present for this dedication service provided institutional recognition for Allen and his congregation. Bethel was home to the Methodist style of worship. It gave this congregation the opening for their type of worship without interference from others but with the accountability to the Methodist elder in the area. Asbury and others made sure that the present and future presiding elders of that area were friendly to Bethel church.

Allen and his congregation wanted to have some of their own concerns met. They wanted to elect their own leaders, limit membership to the African race, license their own exhorters and local pastors, and manage their own concerns. They also agreed to be subject to the Methodist church and its creeds and discipline. Allen and Asbury were separated by race but united in respects that mattered to their faith and following the Gospel teachings.<sup>17</sup>

### **Henry Boehm**

Henry Boehm came from a family of Swiss and German pietists who had settled in Pennsylvania in the county of Lancaster. At age 33 Boehm joined the Methodist

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<sup>17</sup> Wigger, "Weighed in the Balances," *American Saint*, Kindle.



church in a meetinghouse built on land that his brother Jacob had donated. Boehm joined the traveling connection in 1800. He was a traveling companion with Asbury as they opened up the Gospel to the German Brethren. He would preach in German or follow Asbury's sermons with an exhortation in German when they were in an area where Germans had settled. This was a great blessing to the Germans who had not heard the Gospel in their native tongue for many years.

Asbury asked Boehm to translate and publish the *Discipline* in the German language, and this was accomplished in 1807. It was such a pleasure to the German speaking people that he started translating and publishing a collection of tracts the next year.

They traveled through Ohio and Indiana. Asbury found that Methodist preachers had already been there preaching the Gospel. He believed that already twenty thousand people had come to the truth of salvation. Asbury was not well enough to continue the trip crossing the Mississippi into Missouri with others. Asbury with Boehm and some others continued to travel and preach in the territory east of the Mississippi and then traveled into Kentucky.

Boehm lived to be 100, outliving all he knew from the church where he was a member as a young man.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Wigger, "I see, I feel What is Wrong in Preachers and People but I Cannot Make It Right," *American Saint*.

## **Richard Nolley**

This writer mentioned Asbury's notebook and how he evaluated the preachers to make sure he put them in the right places for their ministry. Most preachers received glowing comments in Asbury's notes, but one in particular did not, Richard Nolley. Asbury thought he could not preach but would be good and useful in serving in hospitals, gaol (or jail), and the poor house. In 1811 Asbury gave Nolley another evaluation. This one was similar in his preaching abilities but pious and prudent and good at visiting house to house were added.

Asbury sent Nolley to Tombigbee region, a remote mission area in Alabama. Nolley did well in this ministry as he traveled from settlement to settlement ministering to the people in their homes. He had few opportunities to speak to large assemblies, a wonderful preaching station for him.

A funny story that came out of Nolley's ministry came when he followed some fresh wagon tracks to the upper reaches of the Tombigbee River. There he found the camp of a family who had just arrived. The gentleman became upset when Nolley introduced himself. This man had already moved from Virginia and Georgia hoping to stop the relationship of his wife and daughter to the church. Here he was, not yet having completely unloaded his wagon and a Methodist preacher shows up. He could not get away from the Circuit preachers.

Nolley moved from Tombigbee circuit in Alabama to the Attakapas circuit in Louisiana in 1814 where he died the following winter. His death came about because of

exposure after he fell off his horse into a stream which was several miles from the nearest home where he could get help.<sup>19</sup>

### John Adam Granade

Dr. Baker observed: . . he almost literally danced like David before the ark... his full soul found vent in an outburst of blessing and thanksgiving to God....He then walked the room for some time, singing hymns and spiritual songs, mostly of his own composing. His earnest manner, the shrill and musical tones of his voice, his speaking eyes, now beaming with joy and now suffused with tears, alternating with the varied emotions of his ardent soul.

The service, Dr. Baker noted, lasted not less than two hours. The other eyewitness account of John Granade is Mr. John Carr's from "Early times in Middle Tennessee." Carr describes Granade's singular exercises in preaching – his being constantly in motion. I have frequently seen him in private houses, when if he commenced preaching on one side of the room, he would end his sermon on the opposite side.<sup>20</sup>

Granade went to Lexington, Kentucky in 1804 and studied medicine with Dr. Hinde.<sup>21</sup> He married Miss Polly Wynn in 1805.<sup>22</sup> While serving in Kentucky, he caught a breast disease caused by the elements and excessive labors in ministry. This disease made it necessary for him to be relocated. He never regained his strength and his voice was brought down to a low tone of voice.<sup>23</sup> He died at an early age bringing his ministry

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<sup>19</sup> Wigger, "What God Allows," *American Saint*.

<sup>20</sup> Richard A. Humphrey, introduction and Compilation, *History and Hymns of John Adam Granade, Holston's Pilgrim-Preacher-Poet* (Emory, VA: Emory and Henry College, 1991), 14, 15.

<sup>21</sup> Humphrey, *History and Hymns*, 16.

<sup>22</sup> Humphrey, *History and Hymns*, 17.

<sup>23</sup> Humphrey, *History and Hymns*, 16.

to an end after about three years.<sup>24</sup> In 1807 after his death his wife finished his journal with these words:

He continued to preach when able, and practiced medicine with great success. He was always happy, the Bible was his constant companion, and he enjoyed perfect love. On December 6, 1807, full of peace he passed away. His last words were "Glory to God and the Lamb forever."<sup>25</sup>

### **John Dyer**

Circuit Rider Rev. John Dyer's autobiography states, that he was the "Snow-Shoe Itinerant," familiarly known as "Father Dyer," of the Colorado Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church. His notoriety of being a Snow-Shoe Itinerant is because of necessity not because he just liked to use snow-shoes. In the mountains of the Colorado Conference, it was often impossible to walk or ride horses. The snow was often deep and lasted for many months. The snow was even a problem in the early spring as he tells of his April trip up Blue River.

I was put down for South Park, and on the third day of April left Lincoln City and stopped at Mr. Silverthorn's, in Breckenridge, until about two o'clock in the morning, when I took my carpet-sack, well filled, got on my snow-shoes, and went up Blue river. The snow was five feet deep. It might be asked, "Why start at two o'clock?" Because the snow would not bear a man in daytime, even with snow-shoes. From about two o'clock until nine or ten in the morning was the only time a man could go; and a horse could not go at all.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Dying young was not unusual for Circuit Riders.

<sup>25</sup> Humphrey, *History and Hymns*, 17.

<sup>26</sup> John Lewis Dyer, *The Snow-Shoe Itinerant: An Autobiography of the Rev. John L. Dyer, Familiarly known as "Father Dyer," of the Colorado Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, Cincinnati: 1890 (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2010), 149.*

Rev. Dryer like most other circuit riders had financial troubles. It was not a ministry the Conferences could or would support financially.<sup>27</sup> The people they ministered to were mostly farmers or settlers with little to offer them than a meal or a place to rest as they traveled. He tells about a time in 1863 when he was appointed to a circuit in the Rocky Mountains where there had been gulch-mining. The water had failed, and most had moved out to better areas for mining. The only ones left were those so poor they could not get away. His finances were so low that he started looking for work to supplement his income. Most jobs wanted someone to work on Sundays so he was having no luck. He was not sure what he was going to do until a man came to him to ask him to help him.

In the forepart of February, a man came to me who had the contract to carry the mail from Buckskin Joe to Cache Creek by Oro, California Gulch, a distance of thirty-seven miles. He had carried it as long as he could on a mule. It was once a week and he offered me eighteen dollars a week to carry it on snow-shoes. I thought at once; "I can preach about as often as I have been doing, and am not obliged to go on Sunday." So I took the mail, and crossed the Mosquito Range every week, and preached three times a week.<sup>28</sup>

The mail's weight was from twenty-three to twenty-six pounds, with from five to seven pounds of express matter. The carriage was on snow-shoes, over an Indian trail that was covered from three to twenty feet of snow. My snow-shoes were of the Norway style, from nine to eleven feet in length, and ran well when the snow was just right, but very heavy when they gathered snow. I carried a pole to jar the sticking snow off.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Up to 1800, even a full-time itinerant's salary was limited to a paltry \$64 a year. In that year, it was increased to \$80 a year for an unmarried preacher. By comparison, the average annual income of a Congregationalist minister in 1800 was \$400.00. 45. "The Christian History Magazine." In much of my reading, Circuit riders left their conferences going to a new appointment without any money at all.

<sup>28</sup> Dyer, *Dyer*, 163.

<sup>29</sup> Dyer, *Dyer*, 164.

Sometimes, Rev. Dyer had to shovel snow. Other times he had to try to trudge through waist deep snow. He rode Jacks, and traveled on snow-shoes. Ministering in the Rocky Mountains brought a variety of challenges. Rev. Dyer faced them all with the determination of a man called by God to do a ministry no matter what. He accepted that challenge and even though it was sometimes difficult, he persevered to serve the people in the area where God led him.

It was traveling on horseback and dealing with the hazards of the trail that brought Rev. Dyer to have an occasion to preach barefoot. He was not comfortable with these circumstances but had no other choice. He had crossed the Root River in the springtime when the spring was so high that it was out of its banks. He started over with his horse and almost lost his horse. He did not know if his horse was able to swim or not. The horse went under. Dyer ended up having a hard time getting across and his horse with him. After crossing the river he wrung his clothes out and redressed except for his boots and socks. Dyer had earlier been told by a man that he could get a dozen to hear him preach. The place they were to meet was about a mile away. Because of the wet weather, only about seven showed up.

The time came, and the poor Irishman said: "Can't we have a little preaching?" I said: "I can't put my boots on; would it do barefooted?" "Just as well." And it came to my mind that I had not seen so great faith in all the country. I gave out a hymn, and kneeled in prayer. I learned afterwards that it would have been the better way to have stood to pray; as my pants stuck to my legs, and I had to pull them loose, or they would have reached only down below my knees. When everything was adjusted, I took the text: "In those days came John the Baptist preaching, saying, Repent," etc.; and did the best I could barefooted.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Dyer, *Dyer*, 88.

This experience with the wet weather that spring was not the only instance of problems in Dyer's ministry. His experience with taking care of his horse brought both horse and rider to a difficult situation. Methodist Circuit Riders took these difficulties as just another part of their life on the circuit. This next instance happened at the same time and illustrates this attitude.

The next day, when within less than half-mile of Brownsdale, I came to a broad slough, water two feet deep. About midway my old horse went down to his body in the mud. I got off, and took the bridle-reins and pulled, and he made a lunge right toward me. I made for the shore, and he after me, and by the time I got to *terra firma*, was covered with black mud. I pulled the dry grass, and wiped my clothes as well as I could, and also the bridle and the saddle and the horse, all in sight of town. While I was in this predicament, I thought this was too much for anybody except a Methodist preacher, who had made his vows to take things as they come, and thought nothing could compensate me but a good revival.<sup>31</sup>

There was a good revival that came after this experience, but did not come easily. At first things seemed to be good and Dyer was pleased with the response of the forty hearers congregated to hear his message. The meeting was extended for days. He was enjoying the meetings but felt concerned at the same time. When he required of Brother Mapes, his reply answered the question.

"Brother Dyer," he said, "you don't know this people as well as I do. They have their ball, and run opposition all winter." He gave me no encouragement, but I had gone too far to retreat, and was led to plead with God to guide me in every step, and to help, for I knew that God alone was able to save, and that he could thrash the word with a worm. I came with no self-dependence; and it was well, for if ever a man had need of help, it was on this occasion.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Dyer, *Dyer*, 89.

<sup>32</sup> Dyer, *Dyer*, 90.

On my return<sup>33</sup> I found a good congregation, and all the indications of a successful work. The next Friday evening the house was crowded, and we made room and called for penitents. About a dozen came at once, and we had one or two converted; a clear work and everything was going just right.

### **Nathan Bangs**

As most Circuit riders serving the people, there were other needs that needed attention. One that had much influence on the Methodist Circuit Riders and the discipline of study and accountability was Dr. Nathan Bangs. It is said of him:

One of the most conspicuous figures of American Methodism during the first century of its history is that of Dr. Nathan Bangs. In the judgment of its ablest historians he ranks second only to Bishop Asbury among the makers of this church. He was one of the most potent forces in shaping its policy at a time when the glowing itinerant evangelism had reached a period which demanded a more elaborate organization for the preservation of its unity and the multiplication of its usefulness.<sup>34</sup>

His influence to the Methodist Episcopal Church is in the same category as Frances Asbury, John Wesley, and Charles Wesley. He earned his place in the history of the church he wrote about. Bangs was a prolific author of information about the first century of church history in America. His books were controversial and historical. His works on the History of the Methodist Episcopal Church fill four volumes. As a recognized historian, his works are the basis of subsequent histories of the period. Much of his information was first hand from the original sources. Throughout this history he wrote about, he himself was an acknowledged leader.

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<sup>33</sup> From a time of prayer and dreaming.

<sup>34</sup> A.H. Tuttle, *Nathan Bangs* (New York, NY: Eaton and Mains, 1909), 7.



Bangs founded the periodical literature of the church and was the first editor of the *Christian Advocate*. He became the chief editor of the Methodist Magazine, and first of the quarterly Review. As the official head of the Methodist book Concern for eight years, he took the concern from being in debt to having this embarrassment removed. Laying the business foundation for the Concern it has surpassed that of any denominational publishing house in the country.<sup>35</sup>

These are just a few of the things Bangs did to move Methodism forward for God. He was also recognized as “the Father of the Methodist Missionary Society.”

As was stated before, he wrote about the history that he was a part of establishing. He was a young Circuit Rider learning from those that went before him or went with him and received the experience of working a circuit. He started out as many others did. He was not just writing about what he heard. He was writing about what he lived.

The young preacher’s first appointment was with William Anson on Niagara Circuit, which stretched from the head of Lake Ontario over the Grand River and included all the part of the territory known as Long Point which juts into Lake Erie. “The settlements were few, the roads were bad, and the fare very hard. It required six weeks of travel with daily preaching to supply the numerous appointments.”<sup>36</sup>

He started out on the seventh of October with Joseph Jewell, his presiding elder, for the Bay of Quinte Circuit. They had what he described as a terrible road to travel over, hills and creeks, through mud and water, but arrived at last safety in Little York, now called Toronto.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Tuttle, *Nathan Bangs*, 13.

<sup>36</sup> Tuttle, *Nathan Bangs*, 47.

<sup>37</sup> Tuttle, *Nathan Bangs*, 48.

Bangs spent seven years in ministry to Canada. During this time he ended up having health problems that impaired his voice. This changed his style of preaching and gave a new strength to his message. His ministry also changed with his new work as he was appointed to a pastorate in New York and became the agent of the Methodist Book Concern, a job he held for over twenty years.

No one man prior to him did as much as he toward the awakening and elevation of the intellectual life of the Church. He was the founder of the conference course of study for its ministers, and was one of the organizers of its present system of educational institutions.<sup>38</sup>

Bangs was interested in connectional Methodism. So much of what he did is still such a fundamental part of what it is to be a Methodist pastor. It also is a fundamental part of what it is to be a member of the Methodist church. He believed that Circuit Riders were missionaries as well as preachers.

### **Lorenzo Dow**

Most Circuit riders in America went North, South, and West from the coastal area to many different places serving people they believed God wanted them to serve. But there was another man who believed he was called to a different area to do his ministry. That man was Lorenzo Dow who believed he was called to go to Ireland. The early Methodist pastors first came from England; Dow went to Ireland for the same reason that brought them to America. Dow went to Europe more than once. Before these trips, between trips, and after trips, he preached up and down the eastern portion

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<sup>38</sup> Tuttle, *Nathan Bangs*, 11.

of Canada and the United States. He was often called eccentric and crazy at different times by different people.

Being eccentric was not something that came later in life; it started at an early age. Dow had a strong faith and religious standing as a child. He demonstrated this many times. His earliest memory of this is in one of his journal entries.

When I was between three and four years old, one day, whilst I was at play with my companions, I suddenly fell into a reverie about God and those places called heaven and hell, which I heard people converse about, so that I forgot my play; which my companion observing, desired to know the cause: I asked him if ever he said his prayers, night or morning; to which he replied no—then, said I, you are wicked and I will not play with you; so I quit his company and went into the house.

In this brief extract we see the incipient beginnings of that boldness and energy of reproof that afterwards characterized his public ministrations and private labors, and which probably was the secret of the attention he everywhere excited.<sup>39</sup>

Dow felt as strongly about his call to go to Ireland as he did about his call to become a Christian serving God as a Circuit rider. As he ministered in Ireland, he faced something not normal for circuit riders in America. There he was shunned by the other Methodist Preachers because he was not what they considered a right-standing Methodist. In fact, he actually was not a Methodist Preacher because he was not accepted into the Methodist Conference in America. He like Robert Sheffey, preached Methodist doctrine but were never considered “Methodist” preachers by any Conference.

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<sup>39</sup> Lorenzo Dow, *Abridged from His Journal; and Containing the Most Interesting Facts in His Experience*, (Lowell, MA: E.A. Rice, 1841) 1, 2.

Methodism in England and Ireland was different from the Methodism of America. This is still true today. In Europe, Methodism is what others credited to the work of Charles and John Wesley in their club meetings of young men that gathered regularly to encourage each other and hold each other accountable in their relationship with the Lord. The class meetings started by the Wesley's grew into a movement designed to help people be better in the faith they were following, and is still that way today.

The Wesleys started Methodism to enhance their faithfulness and the faithfulness of those who were members of the Church of England. They established groups called "Class Meetings" and Societies that met on a regular basis to make sure they are following the "method" set up by the Wesleys. The Societies also provided a way of holding people accountable. The accountability came from the questioning of the condition of the member's soul, making sure each member is doing everything they needed to do to stay faithful to God. It grew into a movement designed to help people be better in the faith they were following, and is still that way today.

Here in America, that was the reason for the Methodist Circuit riders, taking that message to the people who could not be in the city churches and helping them stay faithful to their walk with God. They even called some of the groups organized in small areas that provided support to each other, "societies." Methodism in America ended up becoming a denomination unto itself, following the beliefs of the Wesleys and not connected to any other denomination. There were no other established denominations

in many of the places visited by the Circuit Riders. Either of these issues could have been the reason for Dow's shunning.

When Lorenzo Dow traveled and preached as a circuit rider, he dealt with the normal obstacles all the other Circuit Riders dealt with. Along with these normal obstacles, he also experienced health issues. In his autobiography, Jacob Young talks about one instance where Dow came out of his sick bed to preach a message that encompassed a great many subjects. His message was one of controversy that angered some and excited others. Young and Dow were at a campmeeting attended by a large number of pastors and a great many in the congregation.

The ground was beautified and highly ornamented with good tents. There were five or six Methodist preachers on the ground, and all appeared filled with the Holy Spirit. There were five Calvinist preachers present – some Presbyterians – some Baptists. Lorenzo was there, but in very poor health; and we discovered, on the first evening, to our great regret, that there were a number of sutlers near the ground, and many rowdies, who showed a disposition to disturb the meeting. Lorenzo and Brother Houston took charge of the sutlers and rowdies. The congregations were unusually large. The word of the Lord appeared to have free course and be glorified. Convictions and conversions were numerous.

Lorenzo outwitted the rowdies on all occasions, so that they became afraid of him. I believe many of them thought he was more than mortal. Though he was feeble he would walk carelessly through the crowd, like a lion among the beasts of the forest....

On Sunday morning I tried to preach at nine o'clock. Lorenzo was lying in the tent very sick. About the time I was making my closing remarks, he came out of the tent holding his hand on his side; his beard was very long, and his clothes very ragged and dirty. He was a sorrowful-looking creature to go into the pulpit. He jumped on to the hand-board, with his back to the congregation – looked over his shoulder, and began saying, "There is a notable robber in this country, who has done a vast deal of mischief, and is still doing it; and I order that the

people may be on their guard, I intend to give you a full description of his character, and the instrument by which he carries on his wicked works.”<sup>40</sup>

As Dow went on about this robber, people thought he knew some of their secrets especially about one particular Baptist pastor. They soon realized that he was speaking about the devil and Satan. In this message he ended up taking a stand about the lies of infidelity, universal salvation, and the idea that God chooses some for everlasting life and others to everlasting perdition and not one could go from one to the other. “With a few arguments, he brushed away Universalism, and seized hold of old Calvinism.”<sup>41</sup>

Dow was a controversial, eccentric gentleman but had a reputation of being someone who knew his Bible. When someone disagreed with him he would challenge them to a debate and most declined. He never cared about who was in the congregation as in the previous example. He preached as he felt the Lord leading him to preach. He did not even let the rowdies and trouble makers allow the Word of God to be hindered. When he was a child, he spoke his mind and then walked away. As an adult, he did all he could to lead others to the truth of God’s Word and kept going back to those places as a circuit rider so he could regularly minister to their spiritual needs.

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<sup>40</sup> Jacob Young, *Autobiography of a Pioneer: Or, The Nativity, Experience, Travels, and Ministerial Labors of Rev. Jacob Young, With Incidents, Observations, and Reflections* (n.p.: Ulan Press, 2012), 52.

<sup>41</sup> Young, *Autobiography*, 53.

## **There Were Tensions between Circuit Riders and Different Groups**

On the Saturday of a camp meeting, a man showed up with four Campbellite<sup>42</sup> preachers and they took the one o'clock hour to preach while Rev. Dyer was scheduled to preach that evening. The speaker, when Dyer went to hear them, looked like the man in Dyer's dream, God had shown him the man would be against him but that he would be saved from this man:

His talk was almost all in opposition to the different Churches; and especially against the Methodists. He said that he would throw all our mourner' benches out of the window, and he gave it to us generally.<sup>43</sup>

Dyer knew because of the dream he had that he should continue as planned.

At night the house was full, and all of the preachers were out to see and hear. We took for our text the words: "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him." The Lord helped me, so that the trial all through the subject was as light as day; and at the close I called for benches. . . . Twenty-two came to the altar, and the meeting was about as warm as I was ever in. Several were converted. It got too hot for my Christian brethren. They went out and looked in at the window. They stayed a few days, and left. Our meeting closed with about thirty converts, and all but one joined our Church.<sup>44</sup>

It was not unusual for the Circuit Riders and Ministers to have controversy with people of other denominations or beliefs. John and Charles Wesley had a situation with the "stillness" movement. This was a group that among other things, decided that the

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<sup>42</sup> Campbellites were part of the Restoration Movement that was prominent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Two of the leaders were Thomas and Alexander Campbell. They were leaders of the Disciples of Christ a group committed to restoring primitive Christianity. They merged with the Christians. The other groups that were part of this Restoration Movement were the churches that proclaimed Christ or God in their title. At this time, they believed that other denominations were not truly Christian. They believed that Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, etc. were not true believers.

<sup>43</sup> Dyer, *Dyer*, 91.

<sup>44</sup> Dyer, *Dyer*, 92.

ordinances were not commands and should be cast off. Charles even overheard one of these believers tell a poor man, “that comfort you received at the sacrament was given you by the devil.”

Two days later, Charles Wesley met with Simpson, who told him, “if I recommended the ordinances, he must preach against me.” Wesley in turn avowed his “resolution never to give them up, as he and our poor deluded brethren had done.” That same evening Wesley preached at the Foundery and met with the “women bands.” He found them in “the wilderness state,” with a sense of lostness and feeling forsaken by God. Wesley recalled, “I told them that their forsaking the ordinances sufficiently accounted for their being forsaken by Christ.” The meeting of the Fetter Lane Society that same evening was full of tension and disputes. Among the charges that Simpson and the “still ones” brought against Charles Wesley was the fact of his “preaching up the ordinances.”<sup>45</sup>

This controversy went on through men that entered into ministry with the Wesley’s and then tried to change the teaching of the Societies. They were doing their best to change these two Societies in particular and in the process trying to get Charles to believe that brother John approved of what they were doing. They claimed that John had abandoned his belief that the ordinances were an important part of the faithful’s spiritual life. John and Charles were in agreement about the ordinances. “They believed in and redefined their Methodist commitment to the “spiritual disciplines, the Lord’s Supper, and the importance of good works as fruits of their justifications.”<sup>46</sup>

This controversy did not sway the Wesleys away from the “means of grace.” It became more established in the formative documents of the Methodist societies, classes, and bands. The theology of the “means of grace” and the Anglican

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<sup>45</sup> John R. Tyson, *Assist Me to Proclaim: the Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007). 90, 91.

<sup>46</sup> Tyson, *Assist Me to Proclaim*, 97.



understanding of the Lord's Supper was firmly set in place in the context and emphasis of the sanctification and Christian perfection.<sup>47</sup>

This controversy caused a great split in these two Societies. Those that continued to follow the teachings of the Wesleys stayed strong and continued to grow.

Another instance of conflict occurred when Joseph Smith, the leader of the Latter-Day Saints, challenged Peter Cartwright to take the Methodists a step or two further and have the ability to take the world. He was trying his best to convert Cartwright to Mormonism, and told Cartwright that the idle stories about them were nothing but sheer persecution. Smith got nowhere in trying to influence Cartwright to join him. Cartwright ended up telling him about an experience he had previously with Mormons trying to interfere with his ministry.

Cartwright was having a campmeeting in Morgan County when 20 or 30 Mormons came to the meeting. On Saturday, after the 11:00 sermon they had a break. The Mormons collected in the corner of the encampment and started singing. As the people finished eating they went to hear them sing. After a large group came to hear them, they started on what Cartwright believed was their plan.

At length (according, I have no doubt, to a preconcerted plan) an old lady Mormon began to shout, and after shouting a while, she swooned away and fell into the arms of her husband. The old man proclaimed that his wife had gone into a trance, and that when she came to, she would speak in an unknown tongue and he would interpret. This proclamation produced considerable excitement, and the multitude crowded thick around. Presently the old lady arose and began to speak in an unknown tongue, sure enough.

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<sup>47</sup> Tyson, *Assist Me to Proclaim*, 97.

Just then my attention was called to the matter. I saw in one moment that the whole maneuver was intended to bring the Mormons into notice and break up the good of our meeting.

I advanced instantly toward the crowd and asked the people to give way and let me in to this old lady, . . . I came right up to them and took hold of her arm, and ordered her peremptorily to hush that gibberish and blasphemous nonsense. I stopped very suddenly her unknown tongue.

She opened her eyes, took me by the hand and said, "My dear friend. I have a message directly from God to you."<sup>48</sup>

Cartwright dismissed this saying he did not want to hear what an old hypocritical lying woman had to say. Her husband got angry, and after exchanging words with Peter, his wife left and Cartwright continued to accuse the man of being a thief with scars on his back from being beaten with cowhide for his villainy. This ended up being true. A young man spoke up telling everyone that this old man had stolen from his father's crib. The old man started sweating and told the people to stop crowding him because it was making him too warm.

Said I, "Open the way, gentlemen, and let him out." When the way was opened, I cried, "Now start and don't show your face here again, nor one of the Mormons. If you do, you will get Lynch's law."

They all disappeared, and our meeting went on prosperously, a great many were converted to God.<sup>49</sup>

This is typical of the outcome of these controversial situations. Whether it is from rowdies, disagreements between denominations, or bad weather, when things are settled, people see the truth of God and want to know Him and give their lives to

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<sup>48</sup> Peter Cartwright, *Wrestling with God and Man: Dramatic Accounts from the Frontier's Most Popular Autobiography*, *Christian History Magazine, Camp Meeting & Circuit Riders*, Issue 45. 21, 22.

<sup>49</sup> Cartwright, *Wrestling with God*, 45.

knowing Him better. There were a great many that could recognize the evil of the ones that wanted to break up the work of these good and many times great ministers.

Circuit Riders dealt with issues that everyone faced as they traveled and migrated throughout the country. Along with the long distances they traveled, needing to learn who the people were in the area they were assigned to, and looking for places to rest their heads, they had to deal with robbers, thieves, and others on the road. Concern for their safety as they traveled on the roads a major issue was they were known for being treacherous. It was infested with robbers and several daring murders.

Peter Cartwright was traveling with an older preacher, Old Father Walker, on a Monday morning after a preaching service. They were traveling east and passed some wagons going west. After traveling a little further, Peter found a gun lying in the road. It was even primed and ready for use. Peter did not normally carry a weapon but found this to be providential and put it in his pocket. As they reached the bottom of the mountain and were still about two miles from their destination, they realized how true this was.

The sun just declining behind the western mountains, we overtook a man walking with a large stick as a walking cane, and he appeared to be very lame, and was limping along at a very slow rate. He spoke to us, and said he was traveling, and a poor cripple, and begged us to let him ride a little way, as he was nearly given out, and was fearful he could not reach the tavern that night.

Brother Walker was ready to give the man assistance when Peter suggested they had too far to go and that they should not trust any man. Walker agreed. As they continued on their trip believing they left this man behind and this was the end, Walker was riding ahead of Peter.

All at once my horse made a spring forward; I turned to see what was the matter and lo! And behold, there was my lame man, within a few steps of me coming as fleet as a deer. I grasped my pistol, which was in my over-coat pocket, cocked it, wheeled about, and rushed toward him; he faced about, and in a few jumps more I should have been on him, but he plunged into the thick brush, and I could not follow him. When we got to the tavern the landlord said we had made a very fortunate escape, for these robbers in this way had decoyed and robbed several travelers lately.<sup>50</sup>

There were many instances like these and when they survived, they did not think about quitting. They thought about thanking God for safety and then moving on to their destination. They often had to think about being on time for their committed appointment to preach. They did allow these issues to keep them from doing their work.

When they went into a new territory, they had to establish themselves. They would not have places to stay or places to preach. People did not know them and many times they had a lifestyle that was not open to having a preaching around. If there was a small town around they might be able to work out an agreement with someone to help them. This may lead them into having their services in taverns, homes, or a barn. Other possibilities were having a setting in the woods or wherever people could congregate and hear the preacher. If the town was big enough, there might even be a court room they could use for their services. After a while, there would be enough people in a circuit area to have a camp meeting and a place would be set up to use over and over.

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<sup>50</sup> Cartwright, *Wrestling with God*, 139.

Along with having some difficulty finding a place to preach, they would have trouble finding a place to stay and have a meal or two. Sometimes they would find a believer happy to see them and welcome them in. After a while they would form friendships or a particular family home would become the regular place they would stay while pastoring in that place. When they were looking for a place in a new area or when traveling from one preaching place to another, they could run into problems. At one point, Asbury told about a place that was a very rough and they only had the floor to sleep on. He was given an animal skin to put down so he did not have to lie directly on the rough boards.

When it was time to retire, he found that the boards might have been better. The skin had fleas.

Other times the problems or issues had to do with a member of the family being anti-Methodist or anti-Christianity. Sometimes it could be an uncomfortable or controversial situation. Peter Cartwright's experiences are more numerous than most because he was in ministry longer than most. He spent seventy-one years as an itinerant pastor which surpasses almost all others. So many did not make it past the age of their mid-thirties.

Cartwright was going on his quarterly meetings and traveling toward Somerset Circuit.

On Friday, about fifty miles, and my horse and myself were both very much tried—I called at several houses on the public highway, and asked to stay all night, but was denied. About dusk I hailed another house, and asked leave to stay. The man said I could not stay, I inquired how far to the next house where he thought they would take me in. He said, "Seven miles." Said I, "My dear sir, I

have rode to-day fifty miles, and ai cannot go seven more. If you will give me a fagot of fire, I will camp out rather than go any further.”<sup>51</sup>

When the man went into the house to get the fire, his “old lady” warned him that if he treated this man like this and gave him the fire, they were in danger of losing everything to fire by morning. The man changed his mind and when Peter came into the house, he asked if the Lady would also give him supper. After his horse was taken care of and he was fed, Peter felt better. He inquired about religious and religious denominations. This led to Peter finding out that the couple was high-toned predestination Baptists. The man told him about these people a few miles down the road that were Methodists. He said he was afraid those people would take over the country. He knew they were o have a quarterly meeting the next day. Peter did not tell him that he was a Methodist preacher. He just kept asking questions. He wanted to find out what this man had to say without telling him, he was a Methodist.

“Methodist,” said I; what sort of people are they?”

“Ah,” said he, “they are the strangest people you ever saw; they shout and halloo so loud you may hear them for miles; they hol that all will be saved, and a man can live without sin in this life, and yet that a Christian can fall from grace; and all this,” said he, “is not half; they are the worst people you ever saw. They had a camp-meeting just over here last year, and they had a tent they called the preachers; tent, and there, by night and day, the preachers carried on all sorts of wickedness, and” said he, “they are begging and taking all the money out of the country.”<sup>52</sup>

After a few more exchanges between Peter and this man, the man and woman went to the kitchen. Their daughter and a niece were there and stayed with Peter and

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<sup>51</sup> Cartwright, *Wrestling with God*, 147.

<sup>52</sup> Cartwright, *Wrestling with God*, 148.

told him that the man was not telling the truth. They had been at one of these meetings and they knew that nothing happened like the man believed and talked about. At the same time the lady told the man that she believed Peter was a Methodist Preacher. He did not believe her and did not care. Peter soon went to bed. The two young ladies started singing Methodist camp-meeting songs. He enjoyed the singing, fell asleep and next morning got up and went on to his quarterly meeting.

Many times they were turned away or had difficult stays like this one. For all the uncomfortable situations there were many more times they were treated kindly and with respect. Peter was comfortable in his Methodist beliefs and his own experiences with the Lord working in his life. He knew personally about the salvation of Christ. Many of the circuit riders went through many years of searching for the truth of Christ and the salvation He offered. When they found it, nothing could turn them away from preaching this same truth to others. No matter what those circumstances might be. They continued on knowing that their work was needed. The following illustration gives us a good look at the blessing of their work in ministry.

After moving to the frontier, Sallie Norris Hobart was worried that she, her husband Calvin, and their child would be in trouble with their religious life. The area had rough and worldly neighbors with drinking, dancing, gambling, and brawling. She knew without regular religious teachings it would be easy for her family to go astray.

Then came Levin Green, a Methodist preacher. He could barely read, and he murdered the King's English, but, as Sallie's son Chauncey remembered, "To him, God, eternity, death, the resurrection, the judgment, heaven and hell, were vivid

and solemn realities....He spoke as if these were actually present, being seen and felt by him.”<sup>53</sup>

Green was only the first of many Methodist preachers that came to that area. Several more religious families moved into the area. With these additions, this area where the Hobarts settled became a flourishing religious community. Young Chauncey Hobart felt close to all these people and his mother at age 9 was still testifying of Levin Green’s ministry to her family and how this was God’s answer to her prayers.<sup>54</sup>

This was a familiar way of building families-in-communities. On the frontier, Methodists communities were woven together by and through the Methodist way of family prayer, neighborhood prayer meetings, class meetings, quarterly meetings, love feasts, and camp meetings. Rituals like these reinforced the frontier families in their faith and values. In turn the nature of those families was changed.<sup>55</sup>

Sometimes their work not only brought blessings to the families of the wilderness but also in their own homes as this next illustration shows.

Corra was married to William Harris, a Methodist Circuit rider. She had been raised in a “proper” Episcopal Church and was a stranger to the differences she would face as she accompanied him in his ministry. Their first home was sparse and for her not a welcome sight. Her first experience after reaching this home was the onslaught of church members coming for a “donation party.” This “party” was set up to bring things for the new preacher and his wife to help them settle in and provide food items for their

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<sup>53</sup> *Christian History Magazine, CD, 38.*

<sup>54</sup> *Christian History Magazine, CD, 38*

<sup>55</sup> *Christian History Magazine, CD, 38*



survival. All the years of their marriage she did her best to be the wife she should be, but never felt she really understood these country Methodists. When William died she moved back to where she lived before her marriage. When she got back into the lifestyle which included attending the church she knew as a child, she realized what she learned by being the wife of a Methodist Pastor was so much better for her soul and spirit.

On Sunday they came home from church and Corra told her sister Sarah that she planned to move back to where she first lived as William's wife. This is where she learned about the relationship with the God her husband taught her about. The life of these country people was so much better than what she had in the city. As she was packing her trunk preparing to leave she knelt and talked to her "William."

There is something wrong with the institutional religion that the church is propagating; but there is nothing wrong with the truth of God for which you stood and made me stand for thirty years, and I am going back where some of the people know it, whether they know anything else or not.

"U here the best, the wisest people don't know what the truth of God is—they think they can find it is in science. Faith is for fools who cannot think."<sup>56</sup>

Corra knew that faith was not for fools who could not think. It was the faith she knew was the truth of God's Word and was for those that could think.

It is awesome to know how these sometimes poorly educated Circuit riders were able to bring the truths of God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to the people. The people could see that they were teaching from the heart and not just the mind. They could recognize the truth. Some loved hearing this truth and welcomed the Circuit Riders into

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<sup>56</sup> Corra Harris, *The Circuit Rider's Wife*, (Wilmore, KY: Bristol Books, 1990), 157.

their lives. Others were convicted of their sin and fought back in every way they could. No matter what the conditions or circumstances, these men knew that God was their helper and guide and went on doing what they believed God wanted them to do. The fact that they were successful in helping others have better and believing lives made all their work go easier. None of their stories says they were sorry they did what they did. They all praised God for all he did in their lives and the lives of those they served. Circuit Riding Preachers is truly a blessed ministry.

In doing the job of Circuit Riding ministry, there were special needs and these special needs brought with it many unique experiences to make sure the spiritual needs of the people were met. It is this need to minister to the spiritual needs of the people on a regular basis that produced the need for a circuit. It would do little good to talk once to people and then walk away. It is the same reason churches have regular worship services, Bible studies, Sunday school classes, and other events. There is a need to regularly teach and encourage people in their walk with the Lord. In a circuit there is a schedule and plan of sorts that the preacher and people could follow and this schedule brought about as regular a plan as possible for services as was possible.

Getting to the people and serving them not only meant a lot of *traveling* but also meant dealing with unusual circumstances. Their horses were almost as important as Bibles. Their Bibles kept them spiritually alert and ready to preach. Most of the time they counted on their horses to get them to where the people were waiting for them to preach. Not all paths were easy to follow, and not all were easy to get their horses

through. Not all circumstances were comfortable for the preachers, but they felt called by God to continue in all circumstances.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CIRCUIT RIDERS WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI

The major Protestant denominations moved West at approximately the same time, but none could claim dominance in any one region. Instead, a rough-hewn ecumenism emerged as both clergy and parishioners found themselves in a decidedly minority position.<sup>1</sup>

There are many stories of the Western Wilderness about people like Buffalo Bill, Sitting Bull, Annie Oakley, Calamity Jane, Billy the Kid, and Wyatt Earp. These stories are exciting, interesting, and an important part of our History. Another part of our history that is not talked, or written about are the stories of the pastors that truly won the West.

The Colorado Rockies (as written in the previous chapter) was not the only area that brought added difficulties to being a Circuit Rider. Another area that brought different situations and challenges was Texas. Early Circuit riders in Texas were also part of the War for Texas's Independence in 1836, and sometimes assigned to minister to the soldiers at the forts.

Protestant Circuit Riders immigrated into the area of Mexican Texas in the footsteps of Stephen F. Austin. They had a different type of challenge. Because they were Methodist or Baptist preachers, Mexican law forbade their ministry. The only religion allowed was Catholicism and anyone preaching anything different risked being imprisoned. These Protestant preachers kept an eye out for the Mexican troops as they

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<sup>1</sup> Ferenc M. Szasz, "How the West Was Really Won: Preparing a Way in the Wilderness/A Gospel with Grit," *Christian History Magazine, Issue 66*, CD-Rom, (2000).

ministered among the American troops that were fighting for Texas independence. In later years some would ride with the Confederate units during the Civil War.

The American troops looked to the preacher for both spiritual and physical healing. Many of the preachers also studied and practiced the healing arts that were known at that time and became proficient doctors as well as spiritual guides.<sup>2</sup>

Because the Texas Circuit riders were fighting against the Mexicans and the Catholic opposition, many ended up in jail. The people they were trying to serve were living in an area that was controlled by a different country that pushed their denomination. These Circuit Riders did not want to belong to or preach for a denomination they did not believe in.

Several Protestant clergymen found themselves in jail thanks to arrests by a Mexican, Colonel Jose de las Piedras. When this happened, and the Texas colonists first tried to reason with the Mexican authorities to release the preachers, George Slaughter was about nineteen years old. When the jail guards refused to give up the parsons, the Texans opened fire killing several Mexicans, and removed their friends from behind bars. Slaughter saw his first action against the Mexican soldiers as he fired on Colonel Piedras's men. Then he became a freight hauler who turned into a freight hauler/circuit rider.

Slaughter hauled freight between Louisiana and Texas six days a week and preached on Sundays. This was during the time when the American colonists were making plans to revolt against the Mexican government. He had an opportunity to talk

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<sup>2</sup> Kelto Elmer, *Pistol Packin' Preachers: Circuit Riders of Texas* (n.p.: A Republic of Texas Press Book, 1940), Forward.

with Sam Houston about his job as a freighter. Slaughter was then hired to carry messages as he hauled supplies in Texas to the American troops. When Slaughter was arrested by the Mexican authorities it was not for carrying supplies to American troops or for carrying the messages to the troops. He was arrested because he did not stay on the seat of the wagon but stood at a pulpit and preached. This was a major offense.<sup>3</sup>

This is just one of many instances where the Circuit riders of Texas got involved in the war while trying to do God's work. The pastors that served the military were called chaplains. Most chaplains were expected to also be soldiers who could read, write and preach:

In 1865 about 25 percent of the entire federal troops were based in Texas because settlers needed their help.

Men of God rode side by side with these troops as they fought Indians. Once the soldiers returned to the fort, chaplains prepared their sermons and took care of the spiritual needs of the troops, as well as the needs of the soldiers' wives and children. Although the U.S. army included 27,000 men after the civil War, only thirty post chaplains were available to serve this entire army scattered from New York to California.<sup>4</sup>

There were men like William D. Bloys, a Presbyterian Army chaplain holding outdoor services in a pasture about 19 miles from Fort Davis, Texas. He did not try to force men to accept a faith. He did not feel he needed to do more than preach the Word. His messages at the "Spiritual Hitchin' Post of West Texas," as it was called, did

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<sup>3</sup> Barbara Barton, *Pistol Packin' Preachers: Circuit Riders of Texas*, (n.p.: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2005), 18.

<sup>4</sup> Barton, *Pistol Packin' Preachers*, 132.

change the men's lives. It is believed that these changes kept many out of the "Jeff Davis County Jail."<sup>5</sup>

During the Civil War era and after the American West was full of violence and an observer noted that the only need for a minister in El Paso, Texas was to bury the dead. Alexander T. Rankin, a Presbyterian minister described Denver as a town with "no restraint on human passion." There were no laws, jails, or courts in this area. When John Cornell an Episcopal rector stepped off the train in Laramie, Wyoming, he was greeted by the bodies of six recently hanged horse thieves. Baptist James Spencer said he could postmark his letters from Butte, Montana as sent "from Hell." These instances all happened between 1859 and 1880.

West of the Mississippi, it did not matter the denomination, the first churches were small because of the mobility of both pastors and parishioners. Most churches started off as Sunday schools which expanded into small congregations. No matter how modest they were, they were bulwarks of social stability. If there was a building for a meeting place, it was also used as a meeting place for other functions as well.

One story about bringing order out of chaos was that of Methodist itinerant John "Father" Dryer. In 1880 he staved off an anti-Chinese riot in the mining town of Breckenridge, Colorado. An angry mob started shouting "The Chinese must go." Dryer got their attention by mounting the nearest steps and singing "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." After several verses he began to share the message of God's love being

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<sup>5</sup> Szasz, *Preparing a Way*.

intended for all humanity and that all men were brothers. This began the dispersing of the mob.<sup>6</sup>

As different as Methodism in England was from American Methodism so it was with American religion on the eastern side and the western side of the Mississippi. There was a more ecumenical flavor to the Protestant religions west of the Mississippi. In Texas, in the spring of 1832 a Methodist, Rev. N.J. Alford, and Sumner Bacon, a Presbyterian colporter<sup>7</sup> announced a two days' meeting. There were those opposed to this meeting. A Mr. Johnson declared right before the hour of services that he would horsewhip any preacher who dared to enter the pulpit. Rev. Alford felt he could take a whipping as well as any man and proceeded to walk into the pulpit. When Johnson sized up the situation he felt it best to leave and slunked away.

Others felt it necessary to report the preaching to the Mexican commander at Nacogdoches. After asking some questions about whether they were killing anyone or stealing horses, the commander suggested that they be left alone. This ended up opening the door for camp meetings held on Caney Creek. After the second meeting where five ministers were present the justification was that the government of Mexico had violated its own constitution of 1824 which stated that Catholicism was the only religion allowed and no other religion was legal.<sup>8</sup>

This incident and understanding opened the door for more boldness by other Protestants. There were twelve Methodists, thirteen Baptists, three Presbyterians, and

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<sup>6</sup> Szasz, *Preparing a Way*.

<sup>7</sup> Colporteur is a peddler of religious books.

<sup>8</sup> William Stuart Red, *The Texas Colonists And Religion 1821-1836* (Austin, TX: E.L. Shettles, 1924), 81-82.



three Cumberland Presbyterians making a total of thirty-one pastors in Texas at this time.<sup>9</sup>

The following Protestant churches were organized in Texas prior to the achievement of independence:--William Stevenson organized a Methodist church at Jonesborough (Davenport) in 1817, supposing that he was preaching in Arkansas; Daniel Parker organized a Primitive Baptist church in Illinois and the whole church emigrated to Texas in 1833; another church of like faith was organized near Mena, on the Colorado, in the same year. Milton Estill organized a Cumberland Presbyterian church in what is now Red River county, in 1833; Henry Stephenson organized a Methodist church a few miles east of San Augustine, in 1834; in the same section, Sumner Bacon organized a Cumberland Presbyterian church near San Augustine, in 1836.

After the battle of San Jacinto, the first church to be organized in Texas was the Baptist church of Washington, organized by Z.N. Morrell in 1837.<sup>10</sup>

Soon after the Baptist church of Washington was organized an imposter came and presented himself as a Baptist minister and preached. He also stated he was financially embarrassed and someone in the crowd collected the money he said he needed. This imposter was shortly seen spending the money in ways that were not acceptable to the people. He was in the local saloon, at the race track, and at sporting events. The churches realized that they needed to band together to help their ministries work together in self-defense to be safe from things like this happening again. This brought the pastors of every denomination together to form the "Ecclesiastical Committee of Vigilance for Texas."<sup>11</sup>

The terrain in the western wilderness was often hazardous, and the people were often rougher in nature. The roughness of the west, especially in Texas was just the

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<sup>9</sup> Red, *Texas Colonist*, 84.

<sup>10</sup> Red, *Texas Colonist*, 99.

<sup>11</sup> Red, *Texas Colonist*, 100.

right place for Sumner Bacon. He was a military man turned preacher. He was a man who did not fear the difficult, he did not have polished manners but when he accepted faith he had a soul that gleamed with the noblest affections. In his first job as colporteur or an agent for the distribution of Scriptures in Texas, he moved around the territory freely. He did collide with Roman Catholic prejudices but he continued on his way. At one time he was taken by a band of desperadoes. They threatened to kill him so he set down on his knees and prayed earnestly to be saved from harm. When he was done praying, he opened his eyes to find his persecutors gone.

Another time as Bacon was distributing his religious materials, he was reported to Colonel Bean. Bacon was told he could distribute as many Bibles as he pleased but he should not disturb the peace. Later when Bacon and others planned a camp meeting near San Augustine they were assisted by Colonel Bowie and when some men conspired to break up the meeting came the Colonel took charge. As they were entering the area for the meeting, Bowie made the sign of the cross upon the ground and told the preachers to proceed. The matter was settled peacefully.<sup>12</sup>

There were also new responsibilities added to the work of the clergy working in this part of the country. Because of the remoteness of their living quarters and the fact that local governments were not capable, the preachers and their respective denominations were expected to establish hospitals, schools, and even orphanages along with doing their normal ministerial responsibilities.

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<sup>12</sup> [www.cumberland.org.hfcpc/minister/BaconS.htm](http://www.cumberland.org.hfcpc/minister/BaconS.htm).

There were a few hospitals established by the U.S. Army. Those that were not set up for the soldiers had denominational affiliation. The Catholics with nursing nuns established a hospital in the mining town of Price, Utah. This hospital was funded by a compulsory donation of every miner. A hospital was set up in Indian Territory by the Protestant Episcopal Church. The hospital was to care for Native Americans, miners, and railroad men. The Episcopal Church also set up another larger facility on the Navajo reservation in Arizona. At least nine Methodist hospitals were established in Montana with the leading of Brother Van.<sup>13</sup> Along with general care hospitals, specialty hospitals were also established. One of the major concerns of the western clerics was tuberculosis (TB). This brought about work by Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, and Jewish clerics to establish hospitals to care for those with this disease, in Helena, MT, Boise, ID, El Paso, TX, Tucson, AZ, and Denver, CO.<sup>14</sup>

Another need in the American West was education, and this responsibility also became part of the pastors' general duties. Clergy were expected to take part of the educational system. They established parochial schools, sat on boards, and served as superintendents of public schools. It was soon found that having clergy as instructors was not going to work. Instead women were seen as better and more acceptable for teaching. Those that wanted nothing to do with the denominational religion would go

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<sup>13</sup> William Wesley Van Orsdel.

<sup>14</sup> Szasz, *Preparing a Way*.

to a school established by a denomination as long as the teachers were not preachers too. Many of these schools were instrumental in founding denominational colleges.<sup>15</sup>

The Protestant concern for education culminated in the establishment of numerous small denominational colleges all through the West. The Presbyterians founded Hastings College (Nebraska), Austin (Texas), and Occidental (California), while the Disciples of Christ established Pepperdine (California) and Texas Christian University. The Methodists founded Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Nebraska Wesleyan in Lincoln (for years known as "Northern Methodist"), and the University of Southern California in Los Angeles...denominational colleges educated many a young northwesterner: Gonzaga (Catholic), McMinnville (Baptist), Whitworth (Presbyterian), Linfield (Baptist), Whitman (Congregational), Pacific Lutheran, and so on.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Szasz, "Send Us a Teacher," *Preparing a Way*,

<sup>16</sup> Szasz, "Send Us a Teacher," *Preparing a Way*.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### YESTERDAY AND TODAY

#### **Yesterday**

The Circuit Riders were not doing anything new. Their knowledge of the Bible stories they shared with those they met showed that there was precedent for what they were doing. We read in Genesis about God leading Abram from place to place. Abram did not preach but he took his tribe and his family with him. As they traveled, God showed Himself to those near Abram.

God instructed Abram to leave the land of his father and move to Canaan. He traveled as far as the site of Shechem and on to the oak of Moreh. He moved east from there to Bethel and pitched his tent and built an altar to the Lord. Abram then traveled on to the Negev. When the famine came Abram moved on to Egypt (Gen 12:1-10).

After problems arose between Abram and the Pharaoh over Abram lying about his wife Sarai being his sister, they were escorted out of Egypt. Abram left Egypt and went up to Negev. He then continued on his journey to Bethel where he had been before and where he had built the altar to the Lord (Gen 12:18-13:4).

When Moses led the people out of Egypt, God showed himself to the people leaving with Moses and also to the Egyptians. God knew that the King of Egypt would not easily release Israel to journey into the wilderness and He told Moses that he would strike Egypt with His miracles. These miracles would be done in the presence of all, both Egyptians and Israelites. Moses was given the power of God for this time to fulfill

this message and do the work God had for him to do. He did some miracles so Moses would know that God was with him.<sup>1</sup>

The miracles God performed in the presence of the Pharaoh, king of Egypt and the people included the Aaron's rod being turned into a serpent, the water being turned to blood, frogs filling the land, and the land being plagued with insects. The cattle of the Egyptians died, boils broke out on the men and beasts of Egypt, and hail rained on Egypt. There was the plague of locusts, and then the darkness came over the land. None of these plagues changed Pharaoh's heart and mind. The Egyptian people began to fear Israel's God but that also did not change the mind of Pharaoh.<sup>2</sup>

There was one last plague that God brought on the Egyptians and that was the death of their first-born sons. This last plague was the reason for the Passover or Feast of Unleavened Bread celebration. The blood of lambs was put on the door frame of each house of the Israelites which caused the angel of death to pass over and not put to death their first born.<sup>3</sup>

Everyone knew as they traveled about the happenings in Egypt, and that the God of Israel was the mighty God to be feared. There was not a time when God's people did not share the story of God as they moved from place to place. God also provided a way for everyone who believed in Him to be accepted as one of His own. It did not matter what nation they were from, if they believed in Him and wanted to follow Him, God

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 3:20-4:7.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 7:7:8-10:24.

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 11:1-12:32.

gave them instructions on how to join in and become one of His. God's laws included laws for those not from Israel to become welcome in Israel and in His sight.

The New Testament shows us how the way God's message was changed and shared. Jesus was born and became God in human form. The message is different in that the Messiah they were told would come, had come. Jesus is a servant King and shows and instructs the twelve disciples how to share the message of salvation for all, not just the nation of Israel but all, Jew and later Gentile alike. Early in His ministry, Jesus declares and demonstrates what He wants them to do.

In Matthew's gospel, the Lord Jesus gathers his twelve disciples around him and instructs them to go and tell the lost sheep of the house of Israel the message that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. As they spread this message they are to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons. They are not to go into the cities and towns of the Gentiles or Samaritans. They are to take the barest of essentials. They are not to take or acquire gold, silver, or copper for themselves. They are not to take extra tunics, sandals, or a staff. When they enter a city or village they are to inquire about where there is a house worthy for them to stay. They are to abide there until it is time for them to leave and move on. Jesus tells them that they are to be innocent as doves and shrewd as serpents at the same time. They will be as sheep going into a pack of wolves. Men will take them to court, scourge them in the synagogues, and brought before governors and kings for spreading the message of Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 10-14, 16-18.

It was important that the message of Christ being the Messiah Israel was looking for be made known to them first. Even God's people, Israel did not accept Jesus as their Messiah, and Jesus was warning the Disciples of the hardships they would encounter because of this.

Jesus being the Servant King that He was, was in the same position as the Disciples of that day. Jesus traveled telling his message and suffered persecution. A few stayed with Jesus watching, learning, and ministering with Him. They saw firsthand the hardships and rejections Jesus experienced. Others went to communicate the message as Jesus told them to do. We do not find much information about what they experienced. The Gospel stories focus on Jesus. The following scriptures from the Gospels show some examples of Jesus travel and rejection. Jesus did not stay in one place expecting people to come to Him. Instead Jesus traveled, taking His message to the people. He was only in ministry for about three years before His ascension and return to heaven.<sup>5</sup>

When Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him.<sup>6</sup>

John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. "It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day he \*saw Jesus coming to him, and\* said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Jesus was baptized and began His ministry when he was about 30 years of age (Luke 3:23). Fall of 27AD- Jesus baptism and anointing by the Holy Spirit. Spring 31AD Passover and Passion Week [www.bibletimelines.net/article/31/available-timelines-sorted-by-category/ministry-of-jesus-timeline](http://www.bibletimelines.net/article/31/available-timelines-sorted-by-category/ministry-of-jesus-timeline).

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 3:13.

<sup>7</sup> John 1:26-29.



Jesus did not need this baptism by water nor did he have a need for forgiveness.

With this baptism, Jesus emphasized his identity with John's message and showed himself as one of the purified and prepared people of God. This brought Jesus to be joined with the crowd.<sup>8</sup>

Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.<sup>9</sup>

In His baptism by water, he "joined the crowd, but it was also when he was filled with the Holy Spirit and revealing himself and His relationship as the Son of God, the Messiah. Satan needed to tempt Jesus and show Jesus as not being the promised Messiah. Jesus being in the wilderness preparing himself was the time Satan chose to tempt Jesus.

After fasting for forty days and nights, Jesus was hungry. Satan tempted him by saying, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." Jesus answer was: *It is written 'man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'* Satan then took him to the pinnacle of the temple saying, "If you are the Son of God throw Yourself down. He reminded Jesus of the writings that say the angels will keep Him from harm. Jesus reminded Satan that it was also written, *'you shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'* The next and last temptation took place on a very high mountain. Satan showed Jesus the kingdoms of the world and their glory and told Him it would all be His if He fell down and worshiped

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<sup>8</sup> R.T. France, *Matthew*, TNTC (Downers Grove: IVP, 1985), 94.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 4:1.

him [Satan]. Jesus reply was, *"You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only."*

Jesus sent the devil away and the angels came and ministered to Him.<sup>10</sup>

Satan's intention was to persuade Jesus to do wrong, but the initiative was with God.<sup>11</sup>

Jesus was not ready to move into His intended ministry.

The next day He purposed to go forth into Galilee.<sup>12</sup>

As he traveled, Jesus started choosing His disciples. After choosing His disciples, they all went to Cana of Galilee where Jesus mother was at a marriage celebration.

Here he performed His first miracle of changing the water into wine.

After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother, and His brothers, and His disciples; and there they stayed a few days. And the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.<sup>13</sup>

When Jesus went to the temple for Jew's Passover, He found that they had turned the temple into a market. He scourged those that were doing wrong and drove them all out of the temple. Jesus said to them to take these things and to not make His Father's house a house of merchandise.

After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing.<sup>14</sup>

He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And He had to pass through Samaria. So He \*came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew 4:2-11.

<sup>11</sup> France, *Matthew*, 96, 97.

<sup>12</sup> John 1:43.

<sup>13</sup> John 2:13-14.

<sup>14</sup> John 3:22.

<sup>15</sup> John 4:3-5.

At this land that had been given to Joseph, there was a well. It was called Jacob's well. Jesus met the woman of Samaria and the message of Him being the Messiah was shared with the Samaritans through this woman. She went into the town and shared what Jesus told her.

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. . . . And all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; and they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff.<sup>16</sup>

Jesus did not fight. He walked and passed through the midst of them and went His own way. He went to Capernaum and taught. He went many other places doing the same. He tried to teach them the message of who He was and why He was here on earth.

And it came about on another Sabbath, that He entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely, to see if He healed on the Sabbath, in order that they might find reason to accuse Him. . . . And after looking around at them all, He said to him, "Stretch out your hand!" And he did so; and his hand was restored. But they themselves were filled with rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus.<sup>17</sup>

And those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. . . . Now the chief priests and the whole council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, in order that they might put Him to death.<sup>18</sup>

And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull, they gave Him wine to drink mingled with gall; and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink. And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments

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<sup>16</sup> Luke 4:16, 28-29.

<sup>17</sup> Luke 6:7, 10-11.

<sup>18</sup> Matthew 26:57, 59.

among themselves casting lots; and sitting down, they began to keep watch over Him there.<sup>19</sup>

The Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross and was buried. He arose from the dead and showed himself to some who would spread the word that he was not dead. Jesus had instructed His disciples to go to a designated mountain and wait for Him there. They did as he instructed and when they saw him, they worshiped Him. Jesus spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."<sup>20</sup>

This message was different than the first set of instructions Jesus gave to the disciples. The first message was to communicate the message to the Jews only. This message was different. It did not exclude the Jews but included all the other nations as well as the Jews.

### **What Next?**

The disciples went back to Jerusalem. They drew lots to decide who would become the twelfth disciple to replace Judas who had conspired with the Priests to betray Jesus. One requirement for the position was that whoever was chosen had to

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<sup>19</sup> Matthew 27:33-36.

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 28:16-20.

have been with them as they spent time traveling with Jesus and learning the message and instructions. Matthias was chosen by the casting of lots.<sup>21</sup>

The celebration of Pentecost<sup>22</sup> was near and they needed to prepare. They assembled in one place, and suddenly there was a sound like a noisy wind filled the house and what appeared like tongues rested on each of them and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.<sup>23</sup>

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men<sup>24</sup>, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language....Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.”<sup>25</sup>

This experience with the Holy Spirit opened the door for other nations who wanted to have Jesus as their Savior to be able to do just that. This was God’s way of communicating to them to know and understand that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah, their Savior. In this passage in Acts we see that men from all nations were in Jerusalem. They had no idea what was going to happen but God wanted all to have the opportunity

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<sup>21</sup> Acts 1:21-26.

<sup>22</sup> Pentecost is the New Testament name for the Feast of weeks, when the wheat harvest was celebrated by a one-day festival during which special sacrifices were offered (Leviticus 23:15-21).

<sup>23</sup> Acts 2:1-4.

<sup>24</sup> F.F. Bruce tell that these devout men would have been Jews and proselytes who are indicated. Only at the Jerusalem temple could they attend the special sacrificial services prescribed for the “holy convocation and take part in them (Numbers 28:26-31). F.F. Bruce, *Book of Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 53-54.

<sup>25</sup> Acts 2:4-6, 9-11.

to be saved by the actions of Jesus. These people were astonished to be able to understand the message. It was in their language spoken by men who would not have known their language. They would go back to their respective countries and communicate this message and the miraculous way it was shared with them. Not only would they know of God, but they would now also know of His Son and their Saving Messiah, Jesus. This also brought on them opposition from others as it has always done since the beginning of time.

And as they<sup>26</sup> were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple *guard*, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.<sup>27</sup>

This was only the beginning of the disciples work for the Lord and the communicating of his message to the world. Many scripture passages describe the experiences of the Disciples as they went from place to place sharing the message of the saving Grace of God through Jesus Christ the Messiah. Here are a sampling of those passages and scriptural stories about Philip, Peter, Paul, and Barnabas.

### **Philip**

Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. . . . Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God they sent them

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<sup>26</sup> The Disciples.

<sup>27</sup> Acts 4:1-4.

Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.<sup>28</sup>

This was an opinion changing experience for John. He once believed that fire should fall on Samaria because of their inhospitable treatment of their Master.<sup>29</sup> After this experience, they testified and felt it was time to return to Jerusalem. As they traveled back they continued to testify and communicate the words to the Samaritans.

God had a different plan and sent an angel to tell Philip to go south toward Gaza. Here he saw an Ethiopian eunuch who had come to Jerusalem to worship. The Spirit urged Philip to go and join the chariot. Philip could hear him reading aloud the prophet Isaiah. As Philip and the eunuch discussed Isaiah's message, Philip told the eunuch that the prophet was talking about Jesus. Because they were near some water, the opportunity presented itself for Philip to baptize the eunuch. As soon as the baptism was finished, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip and he found himself in Azotus. As he traveled from Azotus to Ceasarea, he preached the gospel to all the cities along the way.<sup>30</sup>

### **Peter**

The stories of Peter's ministry tell us that he traveled communicating the message, healing the sick, raising the dead, and witnessing to the power of the Gospel.

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<sup>28</sup> Acts 8:4-6, 14-17.

<sup>29</sup> Bruce, *Acts*, 168.

<sup>30</sup> Acts 14:25-40.

Peter also had a dream that showed him that the Lord was opening up His message of salvation to the Gentiles. It was not to be kept in the Jewish communities but open to all. Peter's first experience in this was at the home of Cornelius and those who were with him.

And as he [Peter] talked with him [Cornelius], he entered, and found many people assembled. And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean."<sup>31</sup>

Peter asked why they had sent for him. Cornelius told him of how during prayer he had a vision of a man telling him to send for a man in Jappa named Simon, also called Peter. Cornelius told how pleased he was that Peter came immediately and asked Peter to tell them the message the Lord has for them.<sup>32</sup>

And opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him."<sup>33</sup>

And Peter goes on to tell of John's baptism and proclamation, Jesus of Nazareth being anointed by God with the Holy Spirit, and Jesus death and resurrection. While Peter was speaking the Holy Spirit fell on all present. The Spirit fell on those circumcised believers and also upon the uncircumcised Gentiles. It was obvious to all that God intended for all nations to be saved through belief in Jesus Christ.

Peter returned to Jerusalem and gave his report. Those who were circumcised were upset that Peter ate with the uncircumcised. Peter told the whole story about

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<sup>31</sup> Acts 10:27-28.

<sup>32</sup> Acts 10:29-33.

<sup>33</sup> Acts 10:34-35.



how God gave him the vision of the sheet with all the animals and birds telling Peter that there was no one unholy or unclean. Everyone was to be accepted. He went on to report that he was led to the place where those who were seeking and wanted to hear the message. Peter told them the message of the Messiah. He shared with them how the Holy Spirit fell on them as it had the circumcised who believed.<sup>34</sup>

And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He did upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If God therefore gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?<sup>35</sup>

This message quieted down those who were against sharing the message with the uncircumcised. They began to glorify God that He had granted the Gentiles the same repentance that leads to life.<sup>36</sup>

King Herod wanted to hurt those in the church and began to mistreat them. Herod had John's brother James killed with a sword. This pleased the Jews so he arrested Peter, too. Because it was during the time of Passover (or Feast of the Unleavened Bread), Herod put Peter in prison planning to deal with him after Passover, and had him guarded by four squads of soldiers. About the time Herod was going to deal with Peter, an angel came and woke Peter who was chained and sleeping between two soldiers. The angel led Peter safely and miraculously out of the prison. When Peter was free the angel left him and he went on to the house of Mary, John Mark's mother where believers were gathered in prayer.

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<sup>34</sup> Acts 11:2-16.

<sup>35</sup> Acts 11:15-17.

<sup>36</sup> Acts 11:18.

Everyone was excited about this great show of God's power and blessing. Herod sent men out to find Peter. They could not find him and Herod had the guards executed. Peter then left and went from Judea to Caesarea.<sup>37</sup>

### **Saul/Paul**

Before he believed, Saul (later known as Paul) was first known as one who persecuted those who believed Jesus was the Messiah. The Holy Spirit got his attention and turned his zealot personality from persecuting believers into a man that believed. He began praising and preaching the salvation message of Jesus zealously. The Spirit did not change who he was just what he believed.

Saul's conversion was dramatic because he was so zealous in his mission to persecute those who preached the message that Jesus is the Messiah. The Lord had to be more direct and keep Saul still, so He could deal with him and turn his mind toward Jesus the Messiah.

Saul's conversion had to get his attention. He was on his way to Damascus to persecute the believers. As he traveled a bright light flashed and he fell to the ground and was blind. Saul had to lay as a blind invalid for days until Ananias, a believer was called by God to go and tell Saul the truth of Jesus. The Lord also prepared Saul to hear this message. And this is when Saul began to believe the message of Jesus being the Son of God.

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<sup>37</sup> Acts 12:1-19.

Saul spent some days with the disciples in Damascus and began proclaiming the message of Jesus being the Son of God. Because Saul was known as a persecutor, it took a while for the disciples and others to believe that he truly was one of them.<sup>38</sup>

The disciples supported Saul but the Jews plotted to do away with him. Saul found out about their plot. The disciples wanted to help Saul, but because some were guarding the gates of the city they could not leave that way. The disciples put Saul into a large basket and lowered him out of an opening in the wall.<sup>39</sup>

He went to Jerusalem and with Barnabas's help, was able to convince some that he was truly a disciple. But the Hellenistic Jews wanted to put him to death. The brethren learned of this plot and brought Saul to Caesarea and sent him to Tarsus.

Saul and Barnabas joined up again and returned to Jerusalem. They then traveled to Antioch from Jerusalem and fulfilled their mission. They had John Mark with them. There were others in Antioch, both prophets and teachers. [They were Barnabas, Simeon also called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who was brought there with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.] As they ministered the Holy Spirit led them to set apart Barnabas and Saul for another ministry. After fasting, praying and laying hands on them, Barnabas and Saul were sent away.

Barnabas and Saul went to Seleucia, sailed from there to Cyprus and on to Salamis. John was also with them as their helper. They went on through the island to Paphos. They left Paphos by the way of the sea and came to Perga in Pamphylia. Here

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<sup>38</sup> Acts 9:3-21.

<sup>39</sup> Acts 9:22-25.

John left Barnabas and Saul and went back to Jerusalem. Saul and Barnabas went on to Pisidian Antioch.<sup>40</sup>

As Paul, formerly known as Saul, preached to the Gentiles, many were saved but many came against them. In one instance the Jews became jealous. When Paul explained that God was leading them to the Gentiles they “drove them out of their district.”<sup>41</sup> As Jesus had instructed them to do, “they shook off the dust of their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.”<sup>42</sup>

In Iconium the Jews who disbelieved the message got upset with Paul and Barnabas for what they were doing, and began to turn the Gentiles against them. Paul and Barnabas continued to speak boldly until both the Jews and Gentiles went to their rulers wanting them to be stoned. When this became known to them, Paul and Barnabas chose to flee and went on to the cities of Lyconiam, Lystra, Derbe and the areas surrounding these cities and continued to share the message of the gospel.<sup>43</sup>

When in Lystra they preached the gospel and healed the lame. Those who heard and saw wanted to worship them. Paul and Barnabas refused and wanted to continue on as they were. Jews from Antioch and Iconium who had won favor with many went on to Lystra and stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city. They believed he was dead. He was not dead and rose and went back into the city. The next day, Paul and Barnabas left for Derbe.

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<sup>40</sup> Acts 12:25; 13:1-14.

<sup>41</sup> Acts 13:50.

<sup>42</sup> Acts 13:51.

<sup>43</sup> Acts 14:1-7.

After spending time sharing the gospel in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. They wanted to strengthen the souls of the disciples in those cities. As they encouraged them to continue on in the faith, they said, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”<sup>44</sup> With prayer and fasting they appointed elders for every church.<sup>45</sup>

And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.”<sup>46</sup>

This started Paul’s second missionary journey. Barnabas wanted to have John Mark travel with them. Paul disagreed with Barnabas about John. Saul believed that John had deserted them in Pamphylia. Their disagreement led Paul to go his way with Silas as his traveling and preaching companion. Barnabas chose to take Mark with him and they sailed to Cyprus.

While traveling and preaching in Philippi, a leading city in the district of Macedonia which is a Roman colony, Paul and Silas were preaching, healing and were responsible for the deliverance of some from being possessed by demons. This brought intense anger from some who thought it was not right for Jews to turn their Roman cities into turmoil with this message they were preaching. The crowd rose up and their chief magistrates tore the robes off these two messengers and had them beaten with rods. They were thrown into the inner prison and fastened with stocks at their feet. As Paul and Silas were praying and singing, an earthquake shook the jail and the chains

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<sup>44</sup> Acts 14:22.

<sup>45</sup> Acts 14:8-23.

<sup>46</sup> Acts 14:36.

came off and the doors of the jail were thrown open. The jailer was awakened and became fearful that the prisoners had escaped. When he found they were all there, he fell down before Paul and Silas and asked to find out how to be saved.<sup>47</sup> The jailer and all his family were saved with the simple message that Paul and Silas gave. "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household."<sup>48</sup>

Paul and Silas were asked to leave the city and they continued on their way. Some of the cities they traveled through and preached in were Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth. In many of these places Paul and Silas found trouble.<sup>49</sup> In his travels, Paul and his message were welcomed by many. Many others were angry with what he was saying and did everything they could to keep Paul from preaching his message.

### **Barnabas**

Because of the persecution that came after Stephen was stoned, many scattered and went to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch. Those scattered still believed that the message was still only for the Jews, so, they spoke to no one else about it. Then there were men of Cyprus and Cyrene who traveled to Antioch and shared the message with the Greeks. Upon hearing this the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch.

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<sup>47</sup> Acts 16:11-12, 22-30.

<sup>48</sup> Acts 16:31.

<sup>49</sup> Acts 17:1; 18:4.

Barnabas was a Godly man full of the Holy Spirit and his work in Antioch brought many to believing in the Lord.

Barnabas left for Tarsus trying to find Saul. He found Saul and brought him to Antioch. Saul and Barnabas spent about a year meeting with the church there and teaching them. In Antioch is where the disciples became known as Christians.<sup>50</sup>

Barnabas was a special disciple and traveled and encouraged many. He spent a great deal of time with Paul and then traveled with Mark. When in Jerusalem he openly supported those that were preaching and sharing with the Gentiles. He was convinced that the gospel was for all nations. Jesus spoke these words to them as he ascended into the cloud. Because of his determination many arguments were settled, and some of those in authority in Jerusalem who opposed sharing the gospel with the Gentiles agreed that it was right.

### **Taking the Message to the People**

These passages from the Gospels and Acts tell how Jesus and his followers went to people throughout the Mediterranean World. Events like these are found throughout the Bible; events that describe people sent by God to share the message with people everywhere. They were persecuted, placed in prison, stoned and beaten, suffering physically at the hands of others. But they continued to move about where God led them and boldly shared the message. This is a story that came from God from

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<sup>50</sup> Acts 11:19-26.

the beginning of time as we know it. Whether we are called for a specific purpose or living a quiet life of a family in a small town, we are all called to share the message.

As we read the scriptures with instructions from God to His people, we see laws and messages that are detailed so the people cannot say they did not know. When God brought the children out of Egypt, He gave Moses the Ten Commandments that explained to people what He expects of those that love Him. Again in the New Testament, we also see what God expects:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.<sup>51</sup>

But when the Pharisees heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they gathered themselves together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question testing Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" And He said to him, "*You shall love the Lord Your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind.*" This is the great and foremost commandment. The Second is like it, '*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."<sup>52</sup>

We are to take the message to the people. It helps no one if we do nothing and expect people to come to us wanting to hear what we have to say about the gospel message. Jesus himself took the message to the people. He is the "Servant King"

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<sup>51</sup> John 3:16-21.

<sup>52</sup> Matthew 23:39.



teaching, serving, and leading as He becomes ruler of our lives. The Triune God only wants what is best for us and wants all men to believe. Without taking the message to people, they will never hear. This includes those that are labeled missionaries more so today than yesterday. Most areas have established systems that provide a way of proclaiming the gospel. As Methodists we call these early preachers, Circuit Riders. Other church groups whose to do this in other ways.

### **Today**

As the writer just stated, nowhere in the Bible does it say that we are to simply wait for people to come to us. We are to go and communicate the word. Today going into areas to share the Gospel with people who do not know it is mostly done by missionaries going into remote areas. This writer has talked with friends who are missionaries and they are excited about the work being done in the mission fields. We read about missionaries being killed and believers in non-Christian areas being tortured, imprisoned, and beheaded.<sup>53</sup> What we do not see are missionaries leaving the mission field because the work is too hard, dangerous, or difficult. Many go and stay because they know it is God's will for their lives.

Others are establishing new congregations in areas where people may not necessarily be willing to enter a formal church. While attending seminary, I was invited to attend a church in South Carolina called "Church in a Box." It was setup in a movie

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<sup>53</sup> [www.christianpost.com/news/isis-systematically-beheading-children-in-iraq-they-are-killing-every-christian-they-see-says-chaldean-leader-124594/](http://www.christianpost.com/news/isis-systematically-beheading-children-in-iraq-they-are-killing-every-christian-they-see-says-chaldean-leader-124594/).

theater in an area where new apartments were occupied by people who were unchurched. They have a trailer (the box) filled with everything needed for the service, and panels to change the theater and guide people into one of the many different theaters for the service. On the stage is a group of musicians and a preacher. The music is more the contemporary style, but the message would hopefully be welcomed in any traditional church. A different group of people in another one of the theaters is leading a children's service. As soon as the services are over and everyone is gone it is time to put everything back in the trailer and the movie people set up shop for their afternoon shows. I was there early because the couple who invited me were part of the crew that set things up and put everything away. I had time to look around and watch. As I was looking around the lobby, I saw a poster telling people about the service and inviting them to attend. I know it was permanent and not just for show for those leading the church service, because it was up high enough that it would be difficult to take it down and put it back up every week.<sup>54</sup>

With the changing of time, the lives of Circuit Riders are different than those that spent their time forming most of the religious system in America. Today, Circuit Riders or pastors of multiple churches are often bi-vocational. Many established churches were formed in rural or small town settings as local churches with a Circuit Rider. Thessalia United Methodist Church, the church this writer attends at the present time, is one of those churches. Behind the church is the old school building and across the road

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<sup>54</sup> [www.churchinaboxsolutions.com/#!](http://www.churchinaboxsolutions.com/#!) the most affordable portable church solution available.

from the school is the old Post Office building. Both the school and the Post Office are in bad shape and unusable but they still stand as remnants of former years.

My seminary advisor came to this area for my final ministry formation presentation. Our day was spent with him attending all five churches,<sup>55</sup> with lunch in one church and a question and answer session in another. His comment to me afterword says it all. "I now understand the United Methodist circuit system. These churches are community churches." He also understood that without bringing them together in a circuit, these small churches would cease to exist. Many would be without spiritual leadership and encouragement in their faith.

Another church in this circuit still has the cement slab where people stood to mount their horses. A couple of the churches have two front doors for a former time when women and men did not use the same entrance into the church. Without one willing to serve as pastor to all five churches, these churches would have to close. As it is, many members of these churches have been attending since infancy. They do not want to leave "home." They prefer sharing a pastor.

A funny story happened to this writer when she was pastor in this circuit. While driving the dirt road to the first church, Eaton's Chapel, there was a cow standing on the wrong side of the fence. The gentleman in the car ahead of me made the comment about the cow as he walked into the church ahead of me. All the other men left immediately. About ten minutes later, the men all came back. A cow being out means there is a hole in the fence. Getting the cow back in the fence and patching the hole

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<sup>55</sup> The usual preaching schedule is three churches a Sunday.

was important. It is well known by those that own cattle that if one cow gets out, then all the cows can get out and will. All the men in this particular church have cattle and this cow was one that belonged to one of the members of this church. Knowing these men, being a church member was not an issue. They would have done the same to help a neighbor in this way no matter who he was.

The local Catholic church in this area is sharing their priest with another church about 20 miles away. They would also have to close without this help. It would be hard on the local congregation to make the 20 mile trip to church for every service.<sup>56</sup> The Presbyterian and Christian churches in this town and the one about five miles away are both sharing pastors. I found out from a Presbyterian pastor in seminary that they do not use the word circuit, instead they call it a “yoked” charge.

In this writer’s home town in western Pennsylvania the church she grew up in is now sharing a pastor with a sister church that is located on the other side of Main Street. The Catholic Priest in that same town was asked to serve three churches and work toward bringing them all together in one church. Two of the churches are in need of repair and there is not the financial base to support these repairs.

### **Some Things Never Change**

The continuing saga of the persecution of God’s people continues. There are some who either do not want to hear about God and repentance or want to do the bare

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<sup>56</sup> In this area of the Appalachian Mountain range there are few Catholic churches. Other areas like this writer’s home town in Western Pennsylvania, there are as many or more Catholic churches than Protestant Churches

minimum of God's directions. Those who follow God most closely will often be opposed by those that do not. When Ananias went to Saul, he told Saul the message of Jesus and immediately his sight was restored and he was soon filled with the Holy Spirit. Our responsibility as God's disciples is to open the eyes of those that do not believe, whether that is our family, neighbor, friend, or someone on the other side of the world. We are to communicate and demonstrate that God is real, Jesus is our Savior, and the Holy Spirit still indwells those that believe so we have a Helper with us always.

The Triune God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God's people are to be also. Times do change in terms of transportation and communication. Jesus and His disciples walked, rode donkeys, and took a boat ride occasionally. Early circuit riders, walked, rode horses or horse and buggy, and occasionally forded streams. Today we drive cars, some talk on the radio, and others speak over internet. The message cannot change if we are faithful to our Lord and Savior. God wants His people to share the Good News. The Circuit Riders and those that share that type of ministry are following what God has asked them to do. God knows the difficulties and determination of this ministry. Remember, God is the same yesterday, today and forever. Taking the message to the people is what we are to do, no matter who we are.

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## VITA

Paula Dell Campbell was born in Johnstown, PA on June 12, 1945 and was raised in a small coal mining town of Portage, PA about half way between Johnstown and Altoona. In 1963 I received my High School Diploma from my father S. Emerson Leman, Sr. who was School Board President at the time. Don Campbell and I married two months after my graduation and we left for Argentia, Newfoundland. He needed to finish out his time in the Marine Corps.

In the forty-six years Don and I were married, we adopted twin sons in 1970, had a biological son in 1973 and had 10 major moves. All moves were in the Appalachian Mountains. His home was in Gorham, NH, we lived in western PA for fourteen years. Then we moved to Virginia, West Virginia, and back to Virginia.

On my 51<sup>st</sup> birthday, God called me into ministry. I then went to college for my BS and graduated in 2000. After some surgeries, a broken arm, and taking care of 93 year old Mom Campbell, I started at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in January of 2003. I graduated with my Master's in May of 2008. Don passed away in July of 2009. In 2010 my disabilities stopped me from pastoral ministry in churches. I started the training with Good Samaritan Hospice and I am now a volunteer with them as Chaplain, regular volunteer, doula volunteer (sitting with the actively dying giving respite to care givers). They also found out I had been a church secretary so sometimes I am called in to fill in at the desk answering phones.

In 2012 I started working on my DMin in Revival & Reform track and expect to graduate in May 2015 also at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.